

**The Story of the Holocaust:
Psychological and Historical Perspectives**

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Contextual note: When Dr. Furth passed away in 1999, he had completed the writing of this book and had already sent manuscripts to several publishers, who declined to adopt it.

The Story and the Psychology of the Holocaust Proposal of Hans G. Furth

I started writing the above mentioned book some two years ago when I noticed some curious facts about the teaching of the Holocaust. One, there is in this country widespread interest in the Holocaust, as is apparent in the growing number of articles and books, or the number of visitors to Holocaust museums, notably the “United States Holocaust Memorial Museum” in Washington DC. In addition, there are literally hundreds of courses being taught to high school seniors and as well as to college students. (The USHMM [202-480-1400, X835] provided me with an estimate of four to eight hundred courses in American colleges.) Against this background, I was surprised to observe that knowledge of the Holocaust was generally poor and often distorted. “How come you are alive”? students would ask me as if Hitler, as soon as he had dictatorial powers, had all Jews killed. Moreover, I could not find a single short text on the market that college students or other interested persons could be expected to read to obtain some meaningful overall knowledge and comprehension of the Holocaust. I am thinking here of a text that: a/ presents the most important historical facts about the Holocaust and b/ interprets these facts within its historical, psychological and moral context.

It is quite clear to me that you cannot “teach” the Holocaust by just staying within an objective historical framework. The misdeeds are too atrocious, the killing of Jews is too massive and militarily senseless, to allow students to assimilate the historical accounts in any meaningful fashion. Previously unexplored questions of human psychology and moral accountability cry out to be examined. The two questions of, Why would people *want* to act this way? and How *could* people act that way? refer respectively to individual psychology and to social morality. I was keeping these two questions in mind as I was trying to frame the historical event of the Holocaust into the narrative of a human story.

As I talked to professionals in the teaching of the Holocaust (teaching students or teachers) I have come to realize that there is a strong tradition to keep the teaching on a human interest level – whether with Ann Frank’s or Oscar Schindler’s story or with some other account of survivors, bystanders or even perpetrators. Clearly, the aim of this teaching is something very different from almost any other field. There knowledge of facts, interpretation and overall comprehension are nearly always primary goals. Not so in the teaching of the Holocaust: The imperative of making the Holocaust itself comprehensible is not uppermost in the teachers’ mind. On the contrary, there is a strong tradition of referring to the evil of the Holocaust as “unspeakable” and “unthinkable.” And from there it is just a short step to “incomprehensible.” Trying to make the “incomprehensible” comprehensible would then be felt to be either intellectually or morally amiss, if not something worse. And so the Holocaust teaching today does not really aim at comprehension – it almost presupposes as a given that it is *not* comprehensible – rather it attempts to arouse higher human sentiments and moral values. For this purpose personal memoirs and accounts of victims or rescuers are more suitable than historical facts.

I believe I have in the above paragraph touched on the chief reason why there is no book on the market that describes *and at the same time* explains the Holocaust, why with all the massive historical research there is no serious attempt of explanation or comprehension. Nevertheless, I think that the time has come to pass beyond the stage of incomprehension and present to students an overall account of the Holocaust that aims at a sober comprehension.

To illustrate the way I approach the story of the Holocaust in the proposed book I have here prepared a series of basic questions about the Holocaust. Routinely I have heard inadequate or false responses on these issues.

1. What was Hitler's great crime against humanity? To say, "perpetrating the Holocaust," is a radically incomplete answer. The response, "unleashing World War II," is much more appropriate. This war, with its more than 60 million victims, included the Holocaust and was its obligatory context.

2. When did the Holocaust begin? It did not begin with Hitler's dictatorship in 1933 but some eight years later with the suicidal German attack against the Soviet Union.

3. Were antisemitism and racial intolerance the necessary and sufficient precursors to the Holocaust? Not at all. These attitudes were prevalent in most European countries, such as in France or Russia. A more focused answer to a question of preconditions would be to refer to Hitler's political gifts and to Germany's political situation after World War I.

4. In general, were Jews killed within Germany, such as on the day of the *Kristallnacht*, November 1938? The answer is, no. About 60% of the about 600,000 Jews in Germany and Austria managed to emigrate. Of those who could not or did not want to leave and remained during the war, the vast majority was in 1942 transported to the death camps located in Poland.

5. What were the biggest obstacles for German and Austrian Jews to escape from the Holocaust? At first, from 1933 to 1938, it was not that the Nazis did not permit Jews to leave. On the contrary, after robbing them of most of their belongings, they did all they could to force the Jews out of the country. A sensible response to the question would be to refer to two conditions: During these five years when the possibility of the Holocaust was not even considered, leaving was difficult a/ because for many people it was often difficult or impossible to find a country that would let them in and b/ because leaving required the psychological and physical strength to give up one's habitual way of life and start anew in a strange land.

6. Were Hitler and the Nazi perpetrators mad? The unfortunate answer is: No. They were clinically "ordinary" people caught up in what turned out to be extraordinary historical circumstances.

7. Were most of the German and Austrian people fanatical followers of Hitler? Not at all. A reasonable estimate would be about four millions (out of an adult population of about 40 millions). This proportion, *together with the waging of war*, was ample to terrorize the entire population.

8. Were rescuers of Jewish life "extraordinary" persons? Not in their own estimation

or in any measurable clinical or personal characteristic. They were as “ordinary” as many bystanders. At times they became heroic rescuers by some chance encounter.

9. Is the cry “Why so few rescuers?” justified? Compared to the six million Jews killed, of course they were few. Nevertheless, a reasoned estimate could put the number into the range of millions. However, in this connection the really important question is:

10. Could more individual rescuers have made a substantial difference against the government-ordered and allegedly war-connected killing? Here the answer is, unfortunately, no.

11. In what specific time period could perhaps a greater number of helpers have made a big difference? Before 1941, before the Holocaust started.

12. Is greater interpersonal or interracial tolerance an appropriate and adequate response to the Holocaust? It is appropriate (whatever the concept of race means), but nowhere adequate. The Holocaust was primarily a political and societal, not an interpersonal event.

13. Did Germans *know* about, were they *aware* of the Holocaust? This cannot be answered with a straightforward yes or no. In general, the vast majority did not know, while a relatively small number may have been aware. When after defeat, the German people heard about it some were genuinely shocked but all knew about the regime’s murderousness and destructiveness. Certainly a few people during the war, with effort and considerable risk, *could* have come to know the truth. However, the important missing point in this kind of question is: *What could they have done with that knowledge?* So why take the effort and risk?

14. Can we assess the moral guilt of Nazi perpetrators? This is not an easy task. We can try to reflect on moral accountability. But we must remember that for thousands of years the waging of war was largely isolated from personal accountability. Once Hitler unleashed a war and persuaded the people that Jews were enemies, the Nazis could firmly rely on what to us seems a reprehensible form of blind military obedience. Eichmann’s last written words were: “Obedience was my crime.”

15. Is there a connection between the Holocaust and the nuclear bomb? The Holocaust involves the moral intent of systematic and total genocide. In contrast the bomb, developed in fear that Hitler would have it first, can materially result in massive indiscriminate killing. If Hitler had come to power a few years later and had not neglected modern physics as a “Jewish” science, he could have been in possession of nuclear weapons. Everybody agrees that in defeat he would have welcomed the opportunity to destroy as much as possible, even all human life on the globe. In this sense, the nuclear threat is an integral part of the Holocaust story.

I summarize now the main features of the proposed book. As I’ve said before, I believe that nothing comparable is available and that there is a potential wide readership for it.

1/ It is brief and comprehensive, not more than 200 double-spaced pages.

2/ It includes the main historical facts about the Holocaust and at the same time

provides psychological-moral perspectives necessary for a meaningful understanding.

3/ One aspect of the context is historical. Along this line there are chapters on the political culture of the German past, on other genocides in our time, on the number and character of rescuers of Jewish life and on the number of fanatical Nazis (“Hitler’s willing executioners”). All this is shown in relation to the Holocaust.

4/ Another aspect of the context is psychological. In this respect -- hitherto largely neglected -- I provide a detailed description of the human ability for self-deception and destructiveness (the perhaps most outstanding feature of the Nazi regime), an examination of Hitler’s personality and a clinical assessment of Nazi mass murderers.

5/ The final part deals with constructive ways of responding to the evil of Nazism. We discuss in one chapter the psychology of the rescuers and resisters during the Nazi reign of terror. Most importantly, in the final chapter, we survey the great historical changes following the Nazi upheaval and what lessons we can learn for avoiding another Holocaust.

**The Story of the Holocaust:
Psychological and Historical Perspectives**
Content and Themes

PREFACE – Making comprehensible the incomprehensible: the purposeless, systematic murder of Jewish life in Europe.

A PSYCHOLOGICAL INTRODUCTION

1. On Self-Deception and Destructiveness – Hitler’s regime was animated by a deceptive - destructive ideology that rapidly and inevitably led to war and massive destruction (including the Holocaust), and ultimately to self-destruction.

THE STORY OF THE HOLOCAUST

2. On the Nazi Racism of Destruction – Antisemitism was used by Hitler and his followers as a poisonous fuel to keep the fires of genocidal hatred burning.

3. On the Nazi War of Destruction – Hitler unleashed a new, destructive kind of a war.

4. On the Nazi Deeds of Destruction – As war and genocidal killing became ends in themselves the Final Solution of the death camps was implemented.

5. On the Nazi Pleasure in Destruction – Pleasure in destruction was an integral part of the slaughter of the Jews.

THE HISTORICAL CONTEXT OF THE HOLOCAUST

6. On German History and the Nazi Destruction – From its beginning around 1800 German nationalism had an illiberal destructive core.

7. A Century of Destruction – Genocidal murder, while new for modern Europe, has been a constant factor in human history.

8. On the Number of Rescuers from Nazi Destruction – A fair estimate of the number of Polish rescuers of Jews is part of the Holocaust story.

9. On the Number of Perpetrators of Nazi Destruction – An attempt of estimating fairly the number of fanatical Nazis is relevant to the Holocaust story.

THE PSYCHOLOGICAL CONTEXT OF THE HOLOCAUST

10. On the Mentality of a Person of Destruction – Hitler was an extraordinary, charismatic leader using unsettled historical situations to attract millions of “ordinary” followers to deeds of destruction, and ultimately, self-destruction.

11. On the Psychodynamics of Nazi Destruction – The “ordinariness” of evil

is apparent in the personality of Nazi mass murderers.

RESPONDING TO THE HOLOCAUST

12. On Rescuers and Resisters amid the Nazi Destruction – The “ordinariness” of goodness is evident in a wide sampling of rescuers and resisters.

13. On Responding Today to the Nazi Destruction – What does the cry, “Never again Auschwitz” imply? The Holocaust remains unredeemed and incomprehensible unless we can frame a positive response to the implied question.

AFTERWORD

14. On New Perspectives on the Holocaust – A summary of the somewhat new and perhaps controversial perspectives on the Holocaust which pervade the entire work.

For whatever reason -- personal, familial, cultural, historical -- it was not given to me to feel at home in the country (Austria), the religion (Jewish), not even the language (German) of my birth. So it was no big personal loss for me when, five months after Hitler's annexation of Austria, I left Vienna. When some months later I arrived in England I was truly overwhelmed: "This is the language and the country into which I should have been born," I said to myself.

My grandparents had moved in the 1870s from the provinces to the capital of a large multi-ethnic empire. However, when I grew up in the 1920s, Austria was a small country that had emerged from the collapse of this empire following World War I. I was aware of living in a defeated nation, as well as of the civil unrest that in 1927 led to the autocratic regime of Dollfus. And then there was a first Nazi grasp for power in 1934 which failed only due to the intervention of Mussolini's Italy. But in March 1938 no such help was forthcoming and amid general jubilation Hitler's troops occupied Austria. With severe pressure on Jews to leave the country, I was fortunate to have a friend with a Czech passport who could visit London and enroll me in a YMCA-sponsored scheme to be trained and sent to Australia as a cowboy. Once the war broke out this scheme was canceled and I remained in England for the duration.

When I said good-bye to my grandfather, he reflected: "When after the war we wanted to be part of Germany the victorious powers did not permit it.... Jews have always been persecuted.... Don't worry, nothing will happen to me. I was an officer in the Austrian army." While the first two points sounded almost like an excuse for the Nazi aggression, on the last point he was sorely mistaken. The Nazi violence turned out to be of a quality different from the historical experience of European Jews. You will find the name of my mother's father, Adolf Schindler, on the Transport List 29 of the Gestapo, 28 June 1942, from Vienna to Theresienstadt (Figure 1). Thousands of books have been written on the destruction of Europe's Jews under the Nazi regime. This cataclysmic event is now commonly referred to by the term "Holocaust." Many museums and memorials are devoted to it, notably the Holocaust Memorial Museum in the nation's capital. Although it deals with events that took place on the European continent two generations ago, it is one of the most frequented of Washington museums. Furthermore, the events are of a nature to be utterly abhorrent and incomprehensible to ordinary visitors. Many scholars have called the Holocaust "humanly incomprehensible." The Holocaust survivor Primo Levi titled his narrative on the Auschwitz experience with the question: "Is this a human being?" He expresses the shame of one who realizes that Auschwitz has become part of human history.

The nightmare of history is full of abominable atrocities and murders on a large scale. In many of these cases, a political regime killed people in order to accomplish its purpose, however grotesque it may have been. We can understand why it could be said that a Stalin betrayed an

idea that was fired by the moral imagination. However, the Nazi ideology had no moral basis whatsoever. Hitler did not “betray racism.” Killing and destruction *was* the project. Jews were being slaughtered simply for existing in the shape of human beings. But let us be careful. We could use uniqueness as an excuse for being content with a mere superficial acquaintance of what happened and a purely verbal “That must never happen again.” I believe that is precisely what most people experience when they are exposed to the Holocaust story. They are left speechless and overwhelmed by the sheer, apparently senseless, malice. They then face an unhappy choice: Either they treat the Holocaust as if it had happened on a different planet, as something to which they as human beings cannot meaningfully connect. Or they water down its special nature and assimilate it to just another instance of “man's inhumanity to man.”

My aim in this work is to help readers avoid either of these alternatives by presenting the Holocaust story both in its special quality and in its general relevance for today. It is special on account of the quality of destruction and hate that dominated Nazi ideology. This quality led to crimes and atrocities unheard of before and, fortunately for humanity, to the inevitable and rapid self-destruction of the Nazi regime. The Holocaust is relevant because *unique* historical circumstances joined with *ordinary common* psychological features to bring this event about. While history has changed so that we now have material instruments to extinguish the human species, human psychology remains the same. The Holocaust, I believe, should not only *teach* us about the human potential for (self)-deception and (self)-destruction but above all *motivate* us toward constructive social actions in the direction of saving human existence.

The story of the Holocaust is here presented with equal stress on historical, social and psychological factors, thus avoiding an arbitrary and one-sided emphasis. In fact, this work can be seen as a brief general overview of relevant historical facts along with the social and psychological context. I believe there is a need for such a text to overcome our first normal reactions of unbelief and incomprehension. As an essay that strives to make the Holocaust story comprehensible, it can serve as an educational resource for the curious visitor to a Holocaust museum, the attentive reader of some Holocaust-related essay, or as a brief first comprehensive text for the serious student of the Holocaust.

In Part I, as a Psychological Introduction, I discuss in some detail the human ability for self-deception that, for better or worse, plays its necessary role throughout societies and history (Chapter 1, On Self-Deception and Destructiveness). The four chapters of Part II, The Story of the Holocaust, tell the overall story in a concise manner under the aspect of the Nazi ideology of destruction. This aspect of destruction highlights the uniqueness of what the Nazis perpetrated and responds to the need for a precise terminology. As the story unfolds, I use this attribute of destruction consistently to refer to the destructive (and ultimately self-destructive) quality that characterized the Nazi doings. Thus Chapters 2 to 5 deal, respectively, with the Nazi Racism of Destruction, the Nazi War of Destruction, the Nazi Deeds of Destruction, specifically their crimes against the Jews, and the Nazi Pleasure in Destruction.

To help make the Holocaust story more comprehensible, the following two parts provide additional relevant context. Part III, The Historical Context, begins with Chapter 6, On German History and the Nazi Destruction. Here we are introduced to some antecedents in the German past, particularly some negative features in the Germany of 1871 - 1918. Chapter 7, A Century of Destruction, points out briefly other genocides, that is, government-sponsored mass murders, in the 20th century. Turning to some controversial issues, I suggest in Chapter 8, On the Number of Rescuers from Nazi Destruction, a method of estimating this number for Poland, the unhappy country where the death camps were situated. In Chapter 9, On the Number of Perpetrators of Destruction, I do something similar for the number of German and Austrian Nazi fanatics who could justifiably be called "Hitler's willing executioners." Part IV, The Psychological Context, focuses first in Chapter 10, On the Mentality of a Person of Destruction, on Hitler's own personality and style of leadership. In Chapter 11, On the Psychodynamics of Nazi Destruction, we examine the psychology of the Nazi mass murderers.

In the final Part V, Responding to the Holocaust, I link the story to the hopeful potential of taking a stand against the Nazi destruction. In Chapter 12, On Rescuers and Resisters amid Nazi Destruction, we learn of those people – "ordinary" people in their own estimation – who risked their lives resisting the Nazi onslaught against humanity. The final Chapter 13, On Responding Today to the Nazi Destruction, attempts to bring the story of the Holocaust, if not to an optimistic, at least to an honest, meaningful closure. We face the difficult question: What can I do today in response to Auschwitz? My sense is that even a tentative but positive response to this question -- certainly nothing less -- would allow us to somehow comprehend the incomprehensible that is Auschwitz. At the same time this response will support a fragile human society that after Auschwitz and Hiroshima faces the concrete possibility of its extinction.

Hans G. Furth

1. On Self-deception and Destructiveness

Overview: The story of the Holocaust is introduced as part of World War II -- particularly, Hitler's war of destruction against the Slavic East. We then turn to the psychology of self-deception which the Nazis used to an extraordinary degree and practiced as a historically unique ideology of destructiveness. In the horrendous story of the evil perpetrated by the Nazis we encounter our own defenses of self-deception. This introductory chapter suggests that a meaningful response to Auschwitz requires the overcoming of some of these defenses. In the final analysis we must recognize that the Nazi phenomenon is part of our psychology and our history.

To comprehend the Holocaust and the terror that the Hitler regime wrought over Europe, we have to see the Nazi period of destruction as part of our own culture and history. This means not just human history in general -- with all its atrocities and nightmares --but the history of our modern Western culture of which the Nazis as well as we ourselves are a part.

Hitler and his Nazi party became autocratic rulers of Germany in 1933. With the attack against Poland in 1939 they unleashed the war of destruction that we call World War II. World War I, the most traumatic upheaval and slaughter in Europe until then, had only just ended a mere twenty years earlier. That earlier war had changed nearly everything on the continent but it did not usher in a period of constructive nation building or healing. With a few rare exceptions, ideas of liberal democracy or basic civil rights were not mentioned or practiced anywhere. The idea of interfering in another state's internal affairs was not even thinkable. Social tensions, mutual enmities and political discontent were widespread. With good reason, some scholars consider the entire period from 1914 till 1945, from the beginning of the First to the end of the Second World War, as Europe's second "thirty years' war." [The first one, from 1618 to 1648, devastated the regions and contributed significantly to Germany's political backwardness.]

The Nazi terror of World War II lasted from 1939 to 1945. In this work I shall focus on the horror of these six short years. In particular, I shall highlight the story of the Holocaust. That term refers to the massive, systematic killing in an attempt to rid Europe of *all* Jews. No doubt, this was one of the most horrible of all the horrible misdeeds of Nazism, even as we remember that the Nazis systematically killed other groups of people, such as gypsies, homosexuals or mentally deficient people. Above all, we must remember the Slavic peoples whom they despised as "subhuman" and during the war mistreated and killed by the millions. Even so, the systematic killing of the Jews stands out sharply in terms of the underlying ideology of a total destruction of a European people. It is an historical fact the Jews had been for centuries an important part -- some scholars would say, a crucial part -- of modern European

culture.

We can easily imagine World War II occurring without the Holocaust. In fact, what makes the Holocaust so incomprehensible to us is precisely this absence of any ordinary military or historical purpose. The vast literature on World War II hardly ever even mentions the Holocaust, for clearly it did not significantly influence the course of the war itself. It did not count in the Nazis winning or losing the war. And thus we have come to think of the Holocaust and the War as two separate stories having little to do with each other. This is a mistake.

It is conceivable that a ruler of Germany could have unleashed a war against European nations that looked very much like Hitler's war but did not include the killing of the Jews. In that case, would we be morally outraged at the crimes of war? Would we today flock to museums, looking at the horrors that accompany a war? We did not do so after World War I and I doubt we would have done so after World War II. But then, we must remember that the Holocaust *was* an integral part of World War II even as that war was the integral context of the Holocaust. Without Hitler's (and his many followers') ideology there would have been no war but equally, *without the war there could have been no Holocaust*. To comprehend the Holocaust we thus have to pay attention to that war of destruction and to what I call the underlying Nazi ideology of destruction.

The Nazi Killing of Hungary's Jews

Consider: It is spring 1944. The bulk of European Jews, about five millions, have already been wiped out. The Nazi war machine is everywhere in relentless retreat. It is clear to everybody that Germany is losing the war. The Russian army has driven the German invaders out of Russia and is pressing hard against the occupied Eastern countries. The Western allies have already taken the south of Italy and are about to land in Normandy. Hungary is still among the countries where the local government has so far resisted German demands of deporting the Jews to their death. However, to protect further Hungary's political and military cooperation, Germany has just taken over the country's governmental powers. With much diplomatic effort, political pressure and detailed planning, the Nazis finally succeed in forcing the puppet government to collect the about 750,000 Hungarian Jews in ghettos. From there they would be deported to Auschwitz and final extermination. Consider again: This is the desperate end of a losing war. The Soviet army is about to enter Hungary. The Nazis take care of this situation by starting the deportation within the part of the country that would first be overrun by the Soviets. Precious resources of transportation and manpower are here used for the killing of Jews where common sense would dictate harnessing every last bit of strength against the menacing enemy.

But then, Hitler's was not an ordinary, common-sense sort of a historical war. Even as the Nazi killing of the Jews was not an ordinary, common-sense sort of historical persecution of

the Jews; as the ideology of Nazi racism was not an ordinary, common-sense sort of historical antisemitism. Let me explain. Of course, Europe's history is full of past mistreatment, expulsions and massacres of Jews – as of other groups of people. The pogroms in Russia at the turn of the century were massacres that contributed to the massive influx of Jews into Western Europe and America. And the recent ethnic killings in the Balkans and in other areas of the globe show that similar misdeeds are still being perpetrated.

However in one respect, none of these mass killings are comparable to the Holocaust killing. You need only look at the above-mentioned Nazi killing of over half a million Jews in Hungary, at the last minute before the German invaders were driven out. Killing as a state-sponsored project, *for no other purpose than killing*, had never been done before: Alexander the Great, with the mission to hellenize the world, seized and devastated foreign lands. Rome killed native peoples to introduce its own law and order. Napoleon killed hostile forces to spread the spirit of the Enlightenment. The colonizers killed “savages” to bring them the “blessings” of our civilization. Stalin and Mao killed to shape the people into an ideal state.

Hitler alone killed for the sake of killing: to create an illusory idealized race, a purified Germany within a purified Europe. That is why we have no proper words for Hitler's deeds. The Nazi ideology, the Nazi war, the Nazi killing were something new in European history for which we lack proper words. With Hitler a qualitatively new degree of destructiveness has become part of our culture. It is this that today merits our moral concern and makes the psychology of the Holocaust story uniquely relevant. Faced by the incomprehension of the Holocaust, we ask: How was this possible? As I said before, it is to the course of European culture/history that we must turn in our attempt to frame proper words for the Nazi terror and find a tentative answer to the above query. – I now ask for your patience with my attempt to describe the Nazi phenomenon as part of ordinary psychology, even as I shall continue to show it as part of our culture/ history.

Self-deception and Imagination

The animal that deceives not only others – this is found in all social animals – but itself: that is you and I, a human being. Self-deception is not a bad indicator of what is probably specific to humans. It is found in all people and all societies. Along with destructiveness, deception and self-deception were at the core of the Nazi psychology. This feature is a key for a deeper understanding of the Nazis and their vicious ideology.

There is one common response to a first visit to a Holocaust museum or a first serious reading about the Holocaust. We cry out internally: “This cannot be part of humanity!” We rightly feel ashamed to acknowledge these deeds as belonging to human psychology. And from this follows another common response: “This must have been done by people utterly different from us, by people of a different species!” These are perfectly normal reactions. They

express the feeling of utter horror and disbelief that such a thing could have really happened.

These reactions of incomprehension and unbelief are basically no different from what people felt when the first reports of the Nazi mass killing of Jews reached the outside world. Remember, the Holocaust happened in the midst of a gigantic war that engulfed just about the whole world. That war was seen by many as a desperate life and death struggle of our Western civilization. And the Nazis were seen as a determined foe who had already gained incredible military triumphs. At that time, a strange resistance of unbelief, an inability or unwillingness to accept the horrendous news of the Holocaust in its full import was encountered. It seemed so irrational. What military purpose did it serve? Does not the war produce a severe shortage of manpower? Would the Jews not been forced to do slave labor for the German war effort? On the other hand, people in America recalled that during World War I, to get the USA on their side, the British spread propaganda about alleged German atrocities. So they thought, why should we believe these intrinsically unbelievable stories now?

Here is the reaction of unbelief on the part of one of the judges at Nuremberg where after conclusion of the war German war criminals were being tried. "One reads these accounts again and again – and yet there remains the instinct to disbelieve, to question, to doubt. There is less of a mental barrier in accepting the weirdest stories of supernatural phenomena... than in taking at face value these narratives which go beyond the frontiers of human cruelty and savagery" (Marrus, p. 159). It wasn't just outsiders who reacted like this.

During the war concerned Jewish groups responded in a way that can only be explained as some form of willful self-deception. "Throughout much of the war Jewish leaders planned on the basis that millions of Jewish refugees would be left in Europe after Hitler's collapse. In the face of so many reports of mass killing, the World Jewish Congress continued to believe that starvation was the major cause of death at German hands; and even Jews in Palestine hoped that some of the reports were sensationalist and imbalanced. Perception of the Jewish reality in Europe continued to be affected by what Laqueur calls 'the denial of reality, the psychological rejection of information which for one reason or another is not acceptable'" (Marrus, p. 164). You can see from these instances that in the presence of disturbing information we are easily inclined to disbelieve and to look for a way out. Even today, particularly in Germany, there are still millions who either want to deny or do not want to know anything about the Holocaust.

You, too, as you encounter the Nazi misdeeds, will have to overcome this very natural attitude of not-wanting-to-know. Becoming aware of the human propensity for self-deception is perhaps a necessary preparation for a meaningful comprehension of the Holocaust. Self-deception is possible because of our creative imaginary ability that allows us to imagine just about anything, regardless of whether it is real or unreal, useful or useless. It is an amazing ability that seems to go contrary to what we generally find in biology. Without it, we could not

deceive ourselves and use self-deception as habitually and systematically as we do. Imagination is, however, much more than an individual affair. It is a basic, perhaps *the* basic competence that makes human societies possible in the first place. Imagination, along with self-deception pervades all facets of a society.

Yet until recently, we humans with our self-deceptions have actually done very well. In comparison with other animals, we have in an astonishingly short biological time-span become lords of the earth. Until now, self-deception does not seem to have had serious disadvantages for us. On the contrary, history teaches us that deceit and self-deceit have contributed greatly to our biological success story. However today, after Auschwitz and Hiroshima, all this has changed, almost overnight. In the horrendous darkness of Auschwitz we can glimpse an awful truth on the matter of destruction of humans by humans. The Nazis first brought into history a destructive ideology leading to their own self-destruction. And we know that behind the Nazi ideology there is the mass of historical and personal self-deceptions with which humans have always lived. But now the *total* destruction of humankind is no longer a crazy fantasy but a concrete possibility. This is, I believe, the most important reason why we should try to be as truthful as we can about the Holocaust and honestly recognize the lessons we can learn from it.

The imaginary ability begins in childhood and can easily be observed in young children's most typical activity: social pretend play. By age two to three all children engage in this play. In this they are not concerned whether or not there is an outside reality that goes with the pretense. Rather, they follow their desire, they play "for fun." Of course, we don't call this self-deception, we call it pretend play. But the relation of pretense to possible deception is clear.

Let us ask what precisely children *are doing* as they play? Some suggest that in pretend play they imitate reality. Obviously, they start with something from the culture they live in, say, a car. But they are not seriously interested in how a car really works. Rather, they are fascinated by the actions they can do with things, e.g., with a car: to speed, to overtake or crash with others, to move over difficult terrain, etc. Notice that these are all *social scenes*, that is, actions that take place in imaginary social situations. This is the case also if a child plays alone and even if the play is entirely restricted to a child's own fantasy. Now we can answer the question of what precisely children are doing as they play: *The children play society*. In other words, in playing they create an imaginary society. We can generalize this: All their imaginary activities, all thinking or dreaming, are forms of social acting, forms of a *society-making* or *societal* activity.

This should not surprise us if we reflect that humans and human society are basically identical. You can't have one without the other. And as long as humankind has existed, children's imagination and play has always been at the origin of human societies. What then can

children “imagining” or “playing society” teach us about the basic frame of human societies? Perhaps they do it better than we adults with our conscious speculations and theories, not to mention self-deceptions. For children at play are subconsciously and spontaneously *making* a societal frame. All we have to do is to observe them.

Children of similar age are attracted to each other and tend to play together. In social play they are, in fact, sharing mental images. The pleasure to make and share images with peers is in turn the source of the mutual acknowledgment that children expect and can get only from their peers. So in ordinary social pretend play you have these three components: 1/ the *desire* to make and share social scenes or images; 2/ the actual *making* and *sharing* of these images through speech or actions; and 3/ the desire and expectation of *mutual acknowledgment*. Here then you have the basic frame found in all human societies. [Significantly, the leader-follower Nazi society violated each of these points, especially the last one.]

Now you may understand the reason why I called imagination the competence that makes human societies possible. As children develop this competence and show it in their making of *imaginary play societies*, they are then ready to slowly assimilate and thereby re-construct the *real, adult society*. So think of society not as something that is merely imposed on children from *outside*. On the contrary, society is primarily made and re-made beginning from *within* the child’s actions by each new generation. Only this continual active making explains the fact that we humans, in contrast to nonhumans, have a genuine history: all human societies change over the course of generations. Even more important, we can feel genuinely accountable for the society in which we live only if we consider it as something that we ourselves have made.

Truth and Society

If you consider the three components above as the basis of a societal frame, you can see that *truth* is not part of it. Young children can apparently grasp a societal frame (e.g., in pretend play) but not yet truth. That comes many years later. Quite literally, in development -- that is, *in reality* -- society comes before truth. In fact, in important areas of human life, it is not truth and reality that determine society but the other way around. In a certain sense, each society as it were, determines what *is* real or true and what can be *called* real or true.

Just think of various “truths” that not so long ago were accepted as true and real. Today they are seen as false, such as an “ether” filling the universe. And we can rightly feel ashamed about some of these truths, such as the “truth” of an entire world of action closed to women even as men were thought to be uniquely qualified to do these things; or of deaf people without speech being necessarily stupid (“dumb”). Stereotype racist notions about “civilized” and “savage” people were accepted as a matter of course (as “true reality”) by all Western societies long before the Nazis used racism for their destructive purposes.

That brings us to the theme of this chapter. Our endeavor here is to speak the truth of the Nazi period and, avoiding self-deception, do it in honesty and openness. We realize that historical truth is not a concrete, solid fact that can be grasped like a material object. Rather, it is something *we do* in relation to society; and behind the relation, in each particular case, are personal wishes and images. I have described how the images develop in early childhood and as "social images" relate children to society. These are the images children share with peers. Thus their social development has been going on for a number of years and is firmly conserved in their mentality *before* children are capable of, or interested in, the grasping of truth.

Nevertheless, wishes and images are in fact the indispensable psychological foundations of human societies. Children begin life in attachment to their social images, that is, the social wishes and images they are developing -- their caretakers are of course included in this. Most important, they see themselves as members of that social image. Only on that basis can they construct their own individual identity, their self-image. And here you have the deepest reason why all children are driven from within to share images and to play. For in so doing they create the self as part of an imaginary society. When in subsequent chapters we explore the psychology of Nazism we shall use the notion of "social image" extensively. Here we have indicated the developmental origin of this image. It remains to link up the "imaginary" with the "real" society.

Moreover, the developmental perspective of the social image highlights a peculiar human dilemma. Since the image has its origin in early childhood, it is not easy for truth and honesty, as late-comers, to assert themselves against the firmly rooted desires of the child anchored in that image. Naturally, children assume that the real world conforms to their way of thinking. This has little to do with truth. Quite spontaneously too, young children strive to see themselves in a favorable light and thus become quite early used to be dishonest within themselves. Literally, self-deception is endemic to human psychology. To be true and honest within ourselves and our own society often means that we have to act against subconscious personal and societal prejudices that are part of our habitual social image.

Can we adults ever learn to act differently? This is perhaps possible, but only up to a certain limit and with great effort and a good deal of motivation. According to Freud we conserve in our unconscious mentality our deepest wishes and images of childhood, images that we can never give up. They are the dynamic roots that define our identity and enable us to do whatever is our best or worst. We can therefore never altogether avoid self-deception. But if sufficiently motivated, we can be honest and recognize its possible presence.

Some Psychological Studies

I turn now to some studies of adult self-deception that are part of the social psychology literature. The first one is known as *attribution error*. It is generally recognized that we judge

similar actions differently, depending on whether we are dealing with our own actions or with actions of others. This is most obviously the case if for some reason we have some prejudice against the other. Say, a man eats in a restaurant and sees a certain spoon, exactly like one he recently noticed as missing from his set. He thinks, "the owner of the restaurant will hardly notice if I take this spoon with me. Perhaps somebody has taken my spoon. So I am only doing what many people do. Of course, basically I am not a thief. This action is not typical of me." In this way he sees himself not as somebody responsible for the action, but transfers responsibility upon *outer* redeeming influences – and feels excused from *inner* responsibility.

Now let us assume this man has strong antisemitic prejudices. Seeing a Jewish acquaintance do the same action he would at once judge along these lines: "Here you see again, all Jews are thieves." The same action which on his own person he considered an excusable exception is in the case of the Jewish acquaintance ascribed to the person's character. In addition this action, as confirming evidence, is generalized as typical of all Jews. I need hardly say how wide-spread this *attribution error* is, on both personal and societal occasions. It starts quite spontaneously in early childhood. Throughout history, it has poisoned inter-personal and inter-societal relations and has its part in misunderstandings and conflicts. It contributes to an overvaluation of one's own group and the simultaneous underevaluation of the other. No war has ever been fought that was not also grounded on this form of self-deception.

Another example of self-deception is ominously tied to the human tendency of "blind" obedience to authority. The word "blind" indicates a willful blindness of not-wanting-to-see or not-wanting-to-know the results of our actions, actions that could perhaps disturb our conscience. As is well known, thousands of perpetrators of Nazi crimes claimed they did not know the results of their actions, they were merely being obedient to legitimate authority. If you thought that this is an extraordinary German or Nazi phenomenon, think again. To help you with the issue of "blind obedience" I summarize here an extensive investigation that was done in the 1960s by the social psychologist Stanley Milgram (1974).

Volunteers between the ages of 20 and 50 were recruited by an announcement in local newspapers in New Haven, Connecticut, to participate, for a small payment, in what was called "a study of memory." Arriving at the appointed place, one at a time, they met the authority figure of Professor Milgram of Yale University, dressed in a white hospital coat. He told the volunteers to act the role of the Teacher. They were to instruct a third person, the Learner, in memorizing certain word pairs. The Teacher was first to read a series of word pairs (such as: blue box, nice day, wild duck, etc.) and then test the Learner's memory for the exact pair. Thus, the Teacher would read the key word "blue" and give the Learner the choice of "sky, ink, box, lamp." The response to a mistake was to be some form of increasing punishment. The Teacher volunteers thought of course, as they were told, they were testing the effects of amount

of punishment on memory. However, the entire procedure was rigged to allow Milgram to explore how much physical harm the volunteers were prepared to do in obedience to instructions from authority. The Learner, in fact, was a stooge.

The stooge Learner was placed behind a wall, strapped to what was supposed to be an electric shock machine. In responding to the test questions the stooge pressed one of four buttons, making by design about one error in four responses. In the course of the learning task, the volunteer Teachers administered the prescribed punishment for each error. Starting with a slight shock of 15 volt, the strength of the shock was to be increased with each successive error by 30 degrees. On an imposing looking Shock Generator the volts and the shocks supposedly delivered were clearly marked: from Slight Shock to Moderate Shock, Strong Shock, Very Strong Shock, Intense Shock, Extreme Intensity Shock; then, Danger: Severe Shock; and the last two switches were merely marked as XXX. This entire procedure – which today we would consider neither ethically nor legally permissible -- was thus pure deception.

Yet there is a certain congruence between this study and the Nazi Holocaust – apart from the fact that it was conceived in order to probe the constant justification of the Nazi criminals: I simply obeyed orders; I did not know the ultimate results and did not ask. For example, the Nazis would never use, even among themselves, the phrase *killing of Jews*; rather they referred to *Sonderbehandlung, special treatment* [a cruel play of words on custom-made attention.]

Milgram conducted a series of studies with conditions that were slightly changed. The overall result was as unexpected as it was chilling. Even as at times volunteers hesitated and asked whether they should continue (in response to which they were told to follow the given instructions), an overwhelming majority of these hundreds of volunteers did continue to obey blindly. They thought they were giving shocks of an intensity where they not only could read the designation of extreme danger but could also hear the desperate groaning and protest of the Learner, including the final death-like silence.

There is a “critical shift in functioning,” wrote Milgram (p.133). It "is reflected in an alteration of attitude. Specifically, the persons entering an authoritarian system no longer view themselves as acting out of their own purposes but rather come to see themselves as agents for executing the wishes of another person ... profound alterations occur in their behavior and internal functioning." In conclusion, Milgram contrasts the *autonomous* state of persons responsibly following their internal norms to the *agentic* state of persons blindly doing something in obedience to an external authority. He warns us to recognize authority as an ordinary part of all social structures and be alert to the danger of giving up an autonomous conscience. And, I may add, it is possible that subconsciously, many may have experienced pleasure not only in giving up their conscience but also in freely dispensing extreme pain and destruction.

This possible connection between pain and pleasure seems confirmed by the so-called Stanford Prison Experiment. In that study, done in 1971 by Professor Zimbardo of Stanford University, volunteers were to act out the roles of prisoners and guards. The experiment was to last a week. However, it had to be stopped after two days when the guards were observed to engage in most brutal and inhuman forms of punishment (such as cleaning toilets with bare hands) for alleged infringements while the prisoners (who after all, were free to walk away from the experiment) passively accepted their ill-treatment.

Being Truthful about the Holocaust

We can easily understand that it is difficult to avoid habitual self-deception in everyday social situations. How then can we learn to think in truth and honesty about the history of the Nazi time with its unheard-of atrocities and misdeeds? These include deeds for which we do not even have appropriate names. Nevertheless, the specific aim of this work is to describe adequately these atrocities so that we can begin to approach them in an honest fashion and appreciate their true historical import.

As indicated earlier, honesty and truth are not facts that are there for the taking; they must be recognized as forms of societal relating. It is much easier to use the habitual defense of self-deception or deforming simplification so as to limit our vision to what will not cause any discomfort. This defense is unfortunate but perhaps comprehensible in the case of surviving Nazi perpetrators, bystanders and their immediate families. For them, the Nazi history cannot but be part of their social image. Yet even complete outsiders, people who encounter the Holocaust story for the first time find it difficult, if not altogether impossible, to acknowledge the story as something to which they are related, if only in the sense that the Nazis were co-humans, humans such as you and I.

So we come to realize that, as a child's mentality begins with desire, so also generally in the matter of historical truth and honesty, desire and motivation are decisive factors. Do we really *want* to be honest and truthful? That is the real question. Most surviving Germans today say that they did not know of the destruction of the Jews. I believe that is true. However, it is also true what was said by an honest German: "We did not know, but we could have known." That means, we *could* have known if we had *wanted* to know. Reality, truth and honesty are precarious features of our mental life. When used in conversation they are all ambiguous, with many different meanings. Self-deception is easily involved whenever we use them.

Just to acknowledge this shows a fundamental honesty. You acknowledge thereby that all knowing is fundamentally a wanting-to-know, even as vice-versa all not-knowing is a not-wanting-to-know, or better, a wanting-not-to-know. And as you are beginning to make these ideas your own you come to see truth and reality as what they are for us humans: societal perspectives. This is, however, not the same as the familiar, easily misused slogan that "all is

relative" and "anything goes." On the contrary, when I am saying that truth, honesty, reality are subordinate to society, I insist at the same time that society and culture are something for which we as co-constructors are responsible. As the Nazi story shows, society has normative frames that cannot be violated for long. This is why in this introduction I pointed to children at play where we can literally observe the making of this societal-normative frame. Remember that mutual trust was a basic ingredient of this frame. This is where in human development society and morality start.

With this background, we are in a good position from which in subsequent parts to explore the "incomprehensible" society of the Nazi misdeeds. Our task is to make this society of destruction psychologically real, relatively comprehensible and thus fruitful for us, the survivors. All of us, whoever we are, have the history of Auschwitz and the Nazi behind us: we are all survivors. It remains to frame a humanely "real" answer to it.

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2. On the Nazi Racism of Destruction

Overview: We discuss antisemitism as a form of racism that was prevalent in Europe for hundreds of years. It was not specifically different in Germany from other Western countries. After the catastrophe of World War I and the collapse of the empire Germany was in the grip of severe social and economic upheavals that nourished the rise to power of a charismatic leader like Hitler. He turned antisemitism into a global world view that saw Jewry as responsible for all evils of humankind. This racism of destruction fueled the Nazi war of destruction that led to the Holocaust and, ultimately, to Hitler's and Nazi Germany's self-destruction.

In the introductory chapter we discussed the imaginary capacity which children develop during their first years of life. Specifically, we focused on three psychological competencies: desire, imagination, mutual acknowledgment, to which we now add communication (speech). These four constitute in fact the basic frame of all human societies. And we noted that children are spontaneously creating this social frame. They are, in fact, actively making an imaginary, playful society, and they are living in it, many years before they are ready to assimilate and make, or better, re-make the "real" adult society.

In this connection, we emphasized especially one point, namely, that truth and common reality play a subordinate role in a child's early societal image. It is a chaotic image that can encompass all kinds of things, whether they are possible or impossible, reasonable or unreasonable, pretend or real, logical or contradictory. In relation to the Nazi ideology, we singled out their tendencies for deception and destructiveness. In themselves, these tendencies are ordinary components of a child's societal image. Eventually as children develop to adulthood, this image becomes the *permanent nucleus* of the adult social image. In adults, however, that nucleus is conserved, like a precious treasure, largely in their unconscious mentality. Why should this be?

As a rule, our adult mental powers cannot function well unless they are supported by the dynamism that goes with preconscious desires and images. Along this line it is psychologically advantageous that the adult unconscious image can no longer be easily transformed or corrupted by conscious intent. After all, what counts is not that we *consciously know* a social image, but how we *live* it and what we *do* with it. In this balance, an all too conscious mentality would be a disturbing factor.

However, the unconscious powers within us also imply a possible danger for the survival chances of the human species. For as I implied earlier, within the unconscious mental nucleus lie both what is best and what is worst in humankind. You will probably associate the best with the great deeds and beautiful products that we admire in history as "culture" or

"civilization." I have no desire to disabuse you of this view, as long as you are willing to recognize that the doing of great historical deeds and the making of beautiful products regularly include a good measure of what today we cannot but call bad or ugly.

Social Image, Racism, and the American Experience

Now let us for the moment leave aside what is good in human history. Our concern here is to comprehend the historical evil of the Nazis and its connection to the preconscious level of the social image. This is where the danger for human survival lies. In the case of the Nazis' deadly racism of destruction we can learn something about the unconscious social image and parallel ways of destruction and badness, to the point of self-destruction.

So far we have talked about a *person's* unconscious social image. We can also speak of the social image of a *society*. By this we mean aspects of an image that can be assumed to be wide-spread and common among the members of a particular society. This *common* societal image is in part as chaotic and subconscious as the personal image. Nevertheless, it is the necessary foundation of each society, even as a personal social image is the basis of each personal identity, the self. I introduce the phrase, "societal image" or simpler, "social image," as a neutral psychological concept in order to help you grasp the particular racism pervading Nazism. Are there not other names for this image? There are indeed; and they are all "value-laden." We could say that a social image includes such varied mental contents as ideals, perspectives, values, prejudices, beliefs, meanings, customs, ideologies, and traditions.

These mental contents can be said to belong to a given society in general as well as to the individual members of the society. They all have their beginnings in the development of a child's mentality and they remain conserved, as I just indicated, as the nucleus of the adult mentality. Naturally, each person develops an individual image, different from any other. But each individual is part of, and shares, the common image of the particular society. And this society is constituted as a particular society by this common social image. Significantly for our discussion, the racism prevalent in a society belongs here: as a more or less conscious, but to a great extent preconscious part of that common social image.

We are familiar with the racism affecting the relation between groups of people here in the United States. As part of this society, it has its long history, starting with the slave trade. Why has it been so difficult to eradicate the evils of racism? There are some obvious reasons, of course. Along this line we can say that racism attempted to keep going the economic advantages of outlawed slavery. On a deeper level, we can see racism as part of a preconscious social image that cannot simply be identified with certain conscious actions.

Racism is then not something that we can precisely recognize or name, like a telephone number. It is a pervasive attitude that shows in social actions and relations. It is an integral part of the prejudices, beliefs, values, perspectives, meanings -- to use words from the list above

-- of the common social image. Perhaps recalling briefly the recent history of racism in America will facilitate a better comprehension of how radically different the Nazis' racism of "destruction" was from the "ordinary" racism as it was practiced in the United States. Not so long ago, millions of Americans who shared strong racist attitudes were hardly conscious of being racist. Indeed, they did not want to know anything about racism -- wanting-not-to-know is familiar to us from the introductory chapter. As far as they were concerned, their so-called "racist" actions appeared to them entirely normal and morally above blame. Nevertheless, racism in America did greatly change after World War II. How did this come about?

First of all, Black leaders such as Martin Luther King and many other courageous activists peacefully but forcefully opposed discriminatory practices that expressed and perpetuated racism. Partly inspired by these actions, America during the 1960s experienced a dramatic change in traditional attitudes that had supported racism indirectly. This change had little to do with racism itself. It was basically concerned with personal values, responsibility and traditional authority. Personal morality and traditional social custom no longer automatically meshed. These new attitudes helped people to become for the first time aware of the injustices and violence flowing from racism and of the self-deception practiced in its justification. As at earlier times, in connection with slavery, there was a change in people who had deceived themselves in considering existing slave-master relations a matter of purely social or legal arrangements, not connected to any moral dimension, so now many people throughout the USA changed their social image and began to see discriminatory racial relations as indeed having something to do with personal values, equal justice and social morality.

Through civil disobedience and other initiatives as well as long drawn out legal processes and new legislation, specific racial actions were now recognized as discriminatory and made illegal. At the same time, many social customs related to racism, such as the isolation in housing, recreational, educational, political, and work-related areas were no longer an integral part of the common social image and thus became both socially and legally unacceptable. From two directions then, as it were, American society responded to its social racism: from without, through new, directed legislation and new models of actions and from within, through a raising of social-moral consciousness. The result was that after the 1950s the common social image of American society was being changed considerably and with it its racism. There is still a long way to go; but it is clear that some significant social progress in eradicating racism in the USA has been made and continues to be made.

Antisemitism in Hitler's Rise to Power

If we attempt to understand European racism we must begin, as we did in the case of America, with the basic underlying social images. These are always a function of a specific history and geography and thus differ from country to country. Racism in Europe is entirely

different from U.S. racism if only for the fact that Europe is but a small region where for thousands of years many different nations and languages rubbed against each other. In this situation it was almost obligatory for each of the many different peoples to be on constant guard against the aggressive intrusion of others. Actually, what really counted were not the masses of the "people" but those who had effective power over them, the hundreds of hereditary kings and princes who with few exceptions ruled in Europe from time immemorial.

Countries and nations in a modern sense developed only gradually after 1600. This happened first where geography favored a natural unity between prince and people, such as in Britain, France, Spain and Portugal. In contrast, the German region was a hodgepodge of hundreds of principalities where for centuries various European dynasties fought their feudal wars. Only in 1871 did Germany become a unified country, that is, almost 100 years after the USA! [On these on other points see Chapter 6 on German History.] Because of its geographical location and its late start as a major power Germany did not establish a comfortable social image or national identity. This explains partly its exaggerated nationalism and its fear of being surrounded by enemies – which eventually plunged it into the catastrophe of World War I (1914-1918).

In that war, quite different from Hitler's war, it was not easy to specify the concrete reasons for which the peoples fought. Illusory social images flattering one's own nation were fabricated to justify this unexpected slaughter. In America too heavy war propaganda was instituted to motivate people in the pursuit of military intervention on the side of the allies. One can truly say that in this war deformed social images (stereotypes of Germans, French, Russians, etc.) incorporated in the mind of soldiers were the real enemies, but close to ten millions of humans were dead. Consider this tragic situation! Without illusion and self-deception there could have been no First World War – but neither can there be a human society. This shows the precarious human situation that will occupy our attention throughout this work

World War I was a tremendous trauma for the entire Western world. Yet by far the worst events – as to the possibility of a healthy society – occurred after the end of the war. Only in this way can we understand Hitler's rise to power and the attraction of his racist ideology of destruction. How can one describe the German social image immediately after the peace conference of Versailles, 1919? For a large segment of the population it was a negative image of deep hurt and the collapse of a national identity. It referred to an undeserved defeat (the myth of the "stab in the back"), the attribution of sole culpability for the war (a historical first), the humiliation of a nation proud of its cultural status and the end of the thousand-year-old romantic dream of a German empire. Associated to these negative images were hurtful feelings of envy, resentment and vengeance.

If this indicates an unhealthy social image as the preconscious background of the

situation, imagine now the daily life in Germany during the post-World War I period. There was wide-spread financial and economic collapse; hunger, cold and suffering for millions of people. Political chaos, mutual enmity and fighting between extremist political parties prevailed throughout. On top of all this there was unemployment in the millions (the worst of which disappeared under Hitler's rearmament program almost overnight). In addition, the victorious powers requested reparations and where these were not duly forthcoming they occupied territories and seized whole industries. A democratic constitution was officially in force. However, as I shall show in detail in Chapter 6, Germany had no experience with democratic ways of solving social problems. Ominously, a broad section of the educated sector looked with disdain on "dirty politics" and avoided becoming engaged in the task of building a new society. The tendency of German intellectual and artistic elites to turn away from political reality into the "higher" realms of what they considered genuine *Kultur* contributed here to the eventual political collapse of the new *Weimar* republic.

In this generally unfortunate situation, our capacity of self-deception comes to our help by putting the blame and responsibility for the situation away from us on the "other" (the *attribution error* of Chapter 1). For this purpose, the old "ordinary" European antisemitism (which in Germany was hardly different than in other Western countries) came into its own. Until modern times, within the European community of "Christian" nations, Jews had always been outsiders and were by custom or law excluded from many occupations and social positions. At the same time, whether through envy or ill-will, they were often blamed and punished for *particular* unfortunate situations. With the tremendous influx of Jews into the cities of Europe during the 19th century some people started to see "Jewry" (a mystical global concept) as being responsible for the *entire* cultural upheaval associated with industrialization and capitalism. In the 1920s, during which Hitler's party grew, there were at first perhaps only a few hundred thousands who militantly followed Hitler's fantastic slogans and used them as propaganda for expanding the influence of his party.

What made Hitler's racism and antisemitic fantasies so attractive, first for thousands, soon for millions? He seemed to have a handy answer *and a practical resolution* in response to the unfortunate social situation and the underlying unhealthy social image that we sketched above. He could seem to explain the present German malaise as due to malicious intrigues of racial outsiders, most especially the Jews, who he claimed contaminated the purity and virtue of the German Aryan race. The people could feel that other people, not they were responsible for the social upheavals. They could stand tall and solve the problems by joining the chorus of who shouted "Jews, be gone!," "The Jews are our misfortune!," "Death to Jews!" These became powerful and effective slogans of propaganda for thousands of persons who in addition craved the opportunity to submit themselves to a fanatical leader. Blind obedience to authority

(as discussed in Chapter 1) was more attractive to them than constructing a workable democracy. However, what happened to the millions who were at first repulsed by Hitler's program of violence and racism or even actively fought against his party? How did it happen that they too in the end ran over to the Nazi Party?

I don't want to give you the impression as if great historical events – the German election in 1933 leading to Hitler's chancellorship turned out to be such -- can be explained by psychological factors alone. To grasp how Hitler attained supreme political power it is indispensable to know something of German history and envisage the people in their daily life. (For a description of Hitler's charismatic personality see Chapter 10.) The Nazi Party grew at a time when millions of unemployed workers stood around on the streets of the cities. It was a time of hyperinflation and soon a world-wide economic depression. Hunger, cold and homelessness were wide-spread. While such conditions were also seen in other Western countries, the specific malaise in Germany was caused by that country's political immaturity linked to the flight from political reality, typical of its "romantic" social image.

The parliamentary system was kept going by frequent use of emergency decrees. Bloody street fighting between parties became common place. One image that had wide political appeal and was carefully nourished by the Nazi party was the image of the strong "leader" (the "duke," the "Führer"). Old romantic myths of the extinct German empire and subconscious desires played their part. Many sections of German society were deeply troubled by what they saw as lack of order and discipline in the present Weimar republic. They longed for the "good old time" of the emperor. These desires were linked to romantic illusions of the "Holy Roman Empire of German Nations," an empire that never effectively existed except in imagination but nonetheless stymied German history for centuries.

To make this historical connection explicit, the Nazis talked of the "third *Reich* (empire)" that would last "a thousand years." One can comprehend the dreams of the old aristocracy who had a respected and comfortable life under the monarchy. Yet millions of lower classes shared a similar sentiment. The process of identification is at work here – it is seen in any fundamentally non-democratic society where people subconsciously identify with their rulers and from them derive a vicarious satisfaction. Some sort of unconscious identification with the leader would make comprehensible the proverbial obedience of Germans to authority, and in the present case, their giving up on the fledgling democracy and their longing for a radical change under an autocratic leader.

In the case of Hitler's rise to power, we can see how unhealthy social images (largely subconscious) had tremendous historical consequences. These images influenced political attitudes even against one's better knowledge. Those millions who finally voted for Hitler (note that he never received an absolute majority) were all more or less swayed by the negative

anti-democratic social image that still prevailed in post-World War I Germany. Their misgivings about the Nazi Party were plenty, such as the loud propaganda, the overt force, the hate speeches, the theatrical mass rallies, the vicious slogans against the Jews. This Nazi racism and antisemitism, most of them thought, is nothing new; it is bound to be rhetorical exaggeration, as is all political propaganda. Once Hitler is in power, they would say, he will have to settle down and moderate his views.

Before Hitler, antisemitism together with other anti-ethnic sentiments were part of an accepted German social order that was not too different from other European countries. With his rise to power, however, antisemitism became the fuel that Hitler lit so as to turn a prevailing negative societal image into a positive and aggressively triumphant force. And for the broad masses of people, the non-fanatics who voted for Hitler, the positive promise of the Nazi Party became the decisive moment. They were not preoccupied with the "Jewish problem" as such. However, a strong and respected country of which other countries may stand in fear, that could play its proper role in the world, was a welcome answer to the supposedly unjust peace accords and humiliations that deeply hurt the German social image. And Hitler appeared to them to be the person to have the courage and the leadership qualities to make these promises real.

Antisemitism as a Racism of Destruction

Some such sentiments may partly explain the fateful political decision of millions of Germans in favor of the Nazi party. However, that in Hitler's fantasy the advancement of the German people over other peoples would go hand in hand with *war and total destruction* of other peoples, could not be seen clearly by anybody in 1933. Yet here was the beginning of a *racism of destruction* peculiar to Nazism. It developed gradually to become total and murderous in the first years of the Eastern war and remained dominant throughout the few remaining years of Nazism, leading finally to Hitler's and Nazi Germany's self-destruction.

I am attempting here to explain to you the substantial difference between the "ordinary" racism of European or American history and the Nazi transformation. All other forms of racism, evil as they were in themselves (there is no "good" racism!), turned against specific groups of people. This racism of discrimination addressed people as being "so-and-so," e.g., strangers, competitors, enemies, slaves, unwanted intruders, etc. Discrimination racism can be moderated, as we could see in the case of racism in the USA, or even eliminated. Behind the stranger, the enemy, the slave, you could always see a co-human – the stranger, the enemy, the slave could become a member of your society as long as you were prepared to see them as humans. In this sense, *ordinary* discriminatory racism was directed to people as "so-and-so."

Nazi racism, however, was different. It attacked humankind as such. It was not that certain groups of humans were mistreated for being so-and-so. No, Jews and other groups of people were destroyed for being humans, or more precisely, for *not* being the types of humans

approved by the Nazi ideology. Note that this form of racism concerned humankind itself. It was something new in history, a qualitative jump in evil from what had come before. What was horrible about this racism was its rejection of humankind as it really was and its mad desire to reshape humankind in its own destructive image. For this reason I refer to the Nazi racism by the special name of *racism of destruction*. No wonder the world, including Jews, while prepared for renewed racial discrimination, even persecution or expulsion, could not envisage a form of total destruction that until then had been literally unimaginable.

Before we now briefly discuss this racism of destruction it is pertinent to mention first that so-called "race science" had been a lively topic of academic discourse at some German (and also other) universities since the days of global exploration. Today we recognize that race as it was studied then is not a biologically sound concept. Rather, this form of bogus race research is an illustration of an academic activity of which today we can rightly feel ashamed. It had more to do with justifying European colonial conquests and ethnic discrimination than with objective scientific methods. For the Nazis, however, this mendacious "science," still flourishing in some contemporary scientific sectors, became something fundamental. It allowed them to represent their brand of antisemitism and their plans for German domination as just and responsible. The Nazi ideology accepted some of the most outrageous speculations that were first focused on the difference of "savages" from Europeans. Going beyond this, it postulated ranks of humanness for Europeans "races," with Germanic peoples in the North on top, Romanic peoples in the South further down and Slavic peoples in the East at the bottom. Whereas Germans accordingly had a natural right and obligation to act as the *Herrenvolk* (people of lords), the Slavic peoples as *Untermenschen* (inferior people) were by nature predestined to serve the *Herrenvolk* and accept it as conqueror.

What was the place of Jews in this ideology? They were not even included in the ranks of humans! They were non-humans, or better anti-humans. They were portrayed as being the people primarily responsible for almost all the evil in history, particularly for Germany's treacherous defeat and the subsequent unjust peace treaty, and the country's subsequent sufferings and humiliations. Jews were said to have by nature all kinds of bad and repulsive features. And over and above this, they were portrayed as selfishly clever and cruelly scheming so that they succeeded in having a powerful yet totally evil influence upon the peoples among whom they lived. Jews were likened to vermin that has to be exterminated to assure the purity and soundness of the blood of Germanic peoples.

This murderous image was the official Nazi racism that was presented to the people with glaring and crude propaganda. After the fact, it was obvious for all to see that this racism for all practical purposes announced the intention of a German war of destruction and enslavement against Poland and the Soviet Union as well as the slaughter of the Jews in the Holocaust. We

should also note that during the 1930s the Nazis moderated somewhat their murderous propaganda, at first so as not to repulse the German electorate, later on so as not to alarm the international community. As we said earlier, an "ordinary" antisemitism was wide-spread and "race science" was an accepted discipline in educated German sectors. These two conditions, together with some temporary intentional moderation on the part of the Nazis, sufficed for millions of Germans to hear the Nazis' crazy and vicious propaganda *without really noticing that here a threshold has been crossed* that meant a new form of a war of destruction even as it meant more than "mere" discrimination or persecution of Jews.

After Nazi Germany was defeated and collapsed, most Germans could "honestly" say that they had not been aware of the specific murderous component of the Nazi antisemitism. Even as they "honestly" claimed not to have been aware of the real consequences of this racism of destruction. In Chapter 5 we shall speak explicitly about the mostly subconscious human propensity to take pleasure in destruction. This unpleasant human trait also contributed to the acceptance of a racism of destruction without people having to be consciously aware of the destructive aspect. You can see that we are dealing here with multiple layers of consciousness. What most Germans did falls thus well within the ordinary psychology of deception and self-deception as we talked about it in the introductory chapter.

One more thing should be emphasized in connection with the Nazi race ideology. The vicious image of the Jews was for the Nazis the other side of the superior image of the Germans. The lower the one, the higher the other. This positive side of the racism of destruction was of course something that many Germans accepted in a fully conscious manner. It was something that gave them what they thought a healthy identity and a positive self-image, very different from the self-doubt and negative social image so prevalent before.

National pride and joy of being German was also by far the most important factor on the part of the masses when in the 1930s they jubilantly desired and followed the leader, crying: "We want our leader!", or "Today Germany belongs to us, tomorrow the whole world!" However, that in this transport of intoxication a good measure of destruction and self-destruction was included, of this neither the deceived nor the deceivers were as yet fully aware. Once a reign of war and terror had settled over the land and the murderous impulse of Hitler's racism of destruction had become obvious in the waging of the war in the East, there were in Germany hardly any opportunities left for the people – short of an extraordinary heroism – to take a stand against Hitler and his racism of destruction.

[End of Chapter 2]

3. On the Nazi War of Destruction

Overview: I first describe the close connection between warfare and a people's social image. In a brief survey of European history I note a number of qualitative shifts in warfare that culminated in the senseless slaughter of World War I. After this catastrophe, along with the social upheavals of the post-war period Europeans did not want to face another war. Nevertheless, Hitler in his destructive mentality imposed on Germany a gigantic war of enslavement and destruction over vast regions of Slavic territory. This kind of war of destruction not previously seen in Europe ultimately led to Nazi Germany's self-destruction.

In the preceding chapter we discussed the Nazi racism of destruction as the key to the effective social image of Nazism. I attempted to show that it was the destructive aspect that changed the common concept of "ordinary" racism to something historically new and lethal. The Nazi racism did not just devalue and mistreat isolated groups of people as inferior. It attacked humankind as a whole. As we shall see in the case of the Nazis: Where an evil social image requires the total destruction of another people, the possibility of self-destruction is then only a question of time. For the image resides in a mentality that radically disregards human values. It can easily produce new objects of destruction and change positive into negative objects. As happened in the final days of the war, the German people for whose exaltation Hitler had unleashed the war – and the Holocaust – became in his eyes a people fit for destruction. The exaltation may be illusory and changeable but the murderous wars and the destruction of Jews, Slavs and ultimately of Nazi Germany itself, were real and remain.

It is then not surprising that the Nazi "Third empire," in striking contrast to the Soviet Union, could only be a short-lived reign of destruction and could not exist without the ideology and the practice of a war of destruction. For Hitler, the verse, "Today Germany is ours, tomorrow the whole world!" was not just a poetic or rhetorical exaggeration to nourish national pride – as similar phrases may be used in other countries that aspire to world status. He dreamed of conquering in the Eastern regions a vast area of living space (*Lebensraum*) for German expansion together with masses of people that would be servants (*Untermenschen, inferior humans*) to the German folk-of-lords (*Herrenvolk*). What for other people was at best wishful thinking was for Hitler a fixed determination.

Hitler's War in the East

A war of conquest in the East was therefore a firm plan in Hitler's mind from the beginning of his political career, the most essential component of his gigantic program of world conquest, enslavement and destruction. Consequently after years of rhetorical restraint, of

deception as well as of systematic war preparation, he unleashed in July 1939 the attack on Poland and two years later, the Soviet Union. What were Hitler's war aims? They were amazingly out of touch with reality or history. First, he wanted land that could be colonized and totally Germanized – a romantic throwback to the middle ages of the Teutonic knights. Second, he wanted Slavic servants to be subject to the German lords. Third, he was desirous of the riches of oil, minerals, arable and forest lands available in these regions. Obviously, we are here dealing with geographical dimensions which by far exceed the size of Germany.

This was then much more than a mere aggrandizement of present German borders. It was the planned conquest of a continent-sized empire in imitation of what European powers had done across the globe in previous centuries. At a time when the established powers saw the coming end of the colonial dispensation, Hitler actively planned the colonial conquest of the entire East-European subcontinent well beyond the Volga river, disregarding the fact that the region was already occupied and civilized by Slavs for thousands of years – even though at times there was a considerable influx of German people. In this way he wanted to compete with the British empire – as Germany had done before World War I – and compensate Germany for the loss of its pre-World War I colonies.

People in the Soviet regions might have been prepared to accept Germans as liberators from Stalin's dictatorship and fight for freedom on Germany's side. The masses there lived under a repressive Communist regime where millions had become victims to political persecution. To win them to their side would have been relatively easy as long as the conquering Germans had some constructive plans to pacify and govern the regions. However, the Nazis never thought of treating the conquered people other than as servant people whose wishes need not be consulted. In their racial arrogance they considered the Slavs an inferior race, incapable of making any significant societal-cultural contributions. Although in contrast to the Jewish people, the Nazis did not aim at a *total* destruction of Slavic peoples, yet their destructive philosophy towards them resulted in a ruthless treatment that precluded the possibility of mutual cooperation. This had major consequences for Germany's eventual defeat.

The regions remained conquered by Germany with no effective government or functional organization to build up a body politic. Worse, in their destructive racism the Germans are estimated to have killed about 3½ million Poles (in addition to about the same number of Polish Jews) and 27 million Russians, with many more non-military than military casualties. The conquered peoples in the Soviet Union, though initially inclined to collaborate with their "liberators," quickly experienced how the German conquerors treated them even worse than they had been treated by their own dictator, Stalin. Thus with negligible exceptions, the masses far from turning collaborators on the Nazi side, became fiercely motivated enemies. In comparison with the indoctrinated German aggressors, they were fully prepared to sacrifice their life and

fight to the last in defense of their own country. Stalin was thus enabled to call upon the people to defend the country in “The Great Patriotic War” against the Nazi aggressors. The Russians were eager to repulse the Germans and avenge the countless atrocities they had suffered. What had been unimaginable before, with the cry: "For our country and Stalin," the masses threw waves and waves upon the German aggressor. Clearly, Hitler's destructive ideology contributed here decisively to Germany's eventual defeat.

We could even go further and state that for the purpose of having access to materials Hitler would not have needed to start the Russian war at all. Up to the last moment before Hitler's sudden attack, Stalin was determined to avoid war with Germany at any cost and would have been prepared to make all kinds of concessions. In fact, the timing of the Eastern war while still at war with Britain, was not a rational military decision. As we discussed earlier, Hitler forced Germany into a war because his destructive mentality *needed* a war of destruction. That war began as a surprise attack against a Russia that at the time was allied with Germany and it was preceded by a short period of anti-Bolshevik propaganda. Deceptions and illusions about potential triumph were present from the start. Hitler's self-deception is evident in that he acted as if Germany's recent victory over France had at the same time eliminated Britain as an enemy. In attacking the Soviet Union while still at war with Britain Hitler neglected his own previous counsel not to have Germany involved in a two-front war for a second time in this century.

The Nazis themselves named that war a “war of destruction” (*Vernichtungskrieg*) and contrasted it with the more “conventional” war. In the war on the Western front certain international rules and treaties were in force (e.g., treatment of prisoners, civilian-military distinction, etc.) and were generally followed. But in the East, Hitler's love for war and hatred of Jews coalesced into the vicious kind of war of destruction that he fervently desired. There the army received explicit orders from Hitler, their supreme commander, to set aside traditional rules of war and have no care for the life or interests of the local populations.

Specifically, Bolshevism and Jewry were merged into one hateful enemy image. The Bolshevik Soviet party was presented as a product of Jewish people and as their chosen instrument through which the Jews conspired to take over the world and destroy Christian-Aryan values. The German people were told that it was their sacred duty to defend and preserve these values for Europe and for the world and to destroy the "Jewish-Bolshevik" menace once for all. This racially destructive illusion was imposed on soldiers who in any case were far from enthusiastic about going to war. After the recent catastrophe of World War I, not even a Hitler could motivate his people to the kind of war enthusiasm that still could be seen on all sides at the beginning of the previous World War.

Thus Hitler's evil genius used the power of illusions and deceptions to realize his plans of

world domination. He unleashed here a gigantic and systematic war of destruction and murder, something new in Europe's war-filled history. Merely on account of this aggressive race-policy and war-orientation, Nazism could never aim (as Communism always did) at being embraced by other peoples. Moreover, this war of destruction became the facilitating occasion to make the Nazi racism more radical and destructive. It was the war of destruction, as I said before, that led, beyond the war-related atrocities, to the even more horrific actions of destruction of Jewish civilian life, as we shall discuss in the following chapters. The important point to note is that the idea and practice of a war of destruction was an integral and dominant theme in Hitler's Nazi ideology. However, to better comprehend the nature of this kind of war of destruction in relation to traditionally acceptable cultural norms, it may be helpful to reflect briefly on the history of European warfare.

A Brief History of War in Europe

It has been said that war is a constant factor of our history. Aggression and violence certainly are as basic in human psychology as they are in non-human biology. But we must not forget that what we call war is a particular form of social life-and-death fighting that presupposes a certain societal organization. As long as humans lived in small tribal groups where all members were in personal contact with each other, you can have at most a kind of between-group fighting that would be hardly comparable to what we mean by war today.

It seems likely that war had its beginning in human history with the first formation of chiefdoms. A chief, on the one hand, would engage in wars to establish and confirm his social position and power. On the other hand, only a chief could wage a form of societal fighting that goes beyond a tribal-personal context. This association of wars and chiefdoms has left its historical mark on our present societies. In spite of the vast variety of historical societies we find similar myths and illusions associated with war. The mental notion of the enemy image and its associated stories is part of every societal image. It is then of some comfort to realize that humans probably lived for many, many thousands of years in small tribal-personal groups, without wars in the modern sense and consequently also without the particular myths and illusions wars and enemy images require.

This insight should give us some optimism with respect to what is today urgently needed: our control over and eventual elimination of wars. War is not just an innate evolutionary given. Rather, it has everything to do with our own history and with the way we humans formed our societies. Now don't misunderstand me. I don't dream of a prehistoric idyllic situation where humans were free of illusions and aggression. Without any doubt, early human beings who lived in small tribal groups and had not yet established chiefdoms showed these aggressive attributes as do people – and other animals – today. However, my point is not to simply equate war and enemy images with human psychology. Chiefdoms were first formed perhaps

7,000 years ago, that is, many thousands of years after humans appeared on the scene. And only with this first submission under a leader and the concomitant giving up of personal power and responsibility – the leader taking the place of a personal ideal and conscience – did war become a possibility and has been a constant factor of human history and societies.

To limit ourselves to European history after the collapse of the Western Roman empire, the waging of war was an essential part of every society and its corresponding social image. Without active war making a society could not exist. Leadership in war and in society were usually combined in the same person. This furthered the formation of the class of rulers and of a hereditary nobility. The chief occupation of that class was in fact the waging of wars, as a medieval writer put it: "In spring when knights go out to war." We read this as we would say today in America: "In spring when the baseball season begins." And this is not a bad comparison because the medieval war games of knights are in fact the predecessors of modern sport..

But, of course, the "sport" of war had many decisive historical effects. There is no question that, along with certain economic and cultural factors, wars were the most decisive agents of historical change. Superficial knowledge of history is often nothing but knowing dates of wars and battles. In fact, wars have been at the origin of every single historical society and war myths have always played a prominent part in the social image of a society. Wars were accepted as normal and necessary components of human existence. Withal Christianity did not eliminate wars; but it introduced certain moral rules regarding the waging of war and listed certain conditions for a "just war." As long as these conditions were thought to be followed – albeit that there is not a single historical instance where a war was officially declared unjust – war-making was considered to be both legally and morally justified.

In spite of the fact that *indirectly* the waging of wars had at times tremendous historical results, well into the modern period the number of *direct* participants was relatively small. . However beginning in the 17th century, with improved fire power and new mechanical devices, the waging of wars became not only more frequent and deadly but also directly affected a greater number of people. The devastation of the medieval hundred-year war of the kings of England in France, 1338 - 1453, for instance, was minor compared to the thirty-year war fought 1618 - 1648 in the German regions. Even so, the number of direct participants were still hardly more than a few thousands. Nevertheless, toward the end of the 18th century, the philosopher Kant could write his thesis with the ironic title, "On eternal peace." He saw clearly see that the European societies with their habit of constant war- making were in an untenable position that would eventually lead to the eternal peace of a graveyard, in other words, to total self-destruction.

To forestall this destruction, Kant thought, a transnational instance was needed to which all princes would submit. Note that Kant, like everybody else, considered war not a legal or

moral but a political problem which required a political resolution. Not surprisingly, no rulers took his peace proposals seriously. On the contrary, during Kant's life time, the quality of war expanded dramatically. With respect to legal strictures, it was only *after* World War I that warfare was for the first time presented as a legal issue – hence the famous war guilt clause imposed on Germany at Versailles, even as the League of Nations was instituted as a transnational political body for peace keeping.

We should note that national wars of country against country (rather than prince against prince) started with the Napoleonic wars around 1800. It was the time of Enlightenment and industrialization. For the first time, tens of thousand of "enlightened" citizen were called up as national armies. Subsequently, general military service of several years became obligatory in nearly all European countries. Large standing armies were available in peace times for external as well as for internal employment. Contrary to Kant, the accepted phrase was: "If you want peace, prepare for war." Ominously for the European future, nationalism became a potent social value as an intrinsic source of what is essential in a given society.. Thus the glory and power of a particular nation became a prominent part of a people's social image. Political movements, such as Hitler's Nazis [*Nazi* is short for *nationalistisch*, nationalist], used the ideology of nationalism for their evil purposes.

Throughout the 19th century, after the great French revolution and the Napoleonic wars, most European countries remained politically unfree and immature. Internal revolutions, such as in 1830 and 1848, were almost routine but failed to bring about needed and desirable political changes. With constant war preparations and many serious crises, especially in the second half of this period, the statesmen somehow managed to preserve an unsteady European peace with one major exception. The exception was the short Prussian war against France in 1870, brought about intentionally by Bismarck for the purpose of creating a unified German state. At the same time the Western countries in naive arrogance expanded their economic and military power across the globe and consolidated the Europe-dominated world of the "West" and the "Rest."

Europe's influential and privileged sectors, projecting scientific and technical progress, were lulled into the illusion of living in a peaceful, constantly improving civilized world. Their colonial enterprises were justified as bringing civilization to "savages," another egregious example of an illusory and war-related self-deception. However, this comforting illusion suddenly collapsed with the catastrophic and entirely unexpected slaughter of World War I and the political chaos in its aftermath. As I mentioned earlier, a good case can be made for linking the two World Wars and considering the entire period from 1914 to 1945 as one war. Add to it the Cold War of 1945-1989, you then have a total European war period of 75 years. What a contrast to the previous century of self-congratulatory peace!

I have presented this brief survey for two purposes. One, I suggest that for the period and in itself Hitler's war-making seemed within the accepted norms and values of European culture. War-making was considered part of normal diplomacy and separated from moral concerns. But I also wanted to show that during this period questions of legality and morality were beginning to be asked, primarily on account of the deadly nature of modern mechanized warfare as experienced in World War I. The First World War was indeed something qualitatively new in history, even as the national wars after 1800 were new to what warfare had been before. While in earlier times participants and victims were in the hundreds and thousands, this time it was in the millions.

World War I, a war that was started for no compelling reason and with no clear aims and was expected to last a few months dragged on for over four years. Having sued for an armistice on the basis of President Wilson's 14 points, Germany felt betrayed at the peace of Versailles. The defeated Germans were not treated as equals who had lost an honorable fight but as guilty criminals. For the first time in history a nation was declared guilty (morally? legally?) for having started a war. The Germans had to accept unconditionally what they considered the vindictive judgement of the allies that included huge losses of territory and punitive reparations.

Hitler's War-Making

Hitler came to power by playing on the humiliations and resentment over Versailles that was felt throughout Germany. He joined the rising chorus of at first a few thousands who blamed a Jewish conspiracy for defeat and for the current social ills. His use of a race "science" flattered the self-image of a people that had lost its bearing. It allowed people to nourish thoughts of their own national-racial greatness and to demand a revision of the Versailles peace terms. When Hitler finally became chancellor in January 1933, it was not yet clear that these racial ideas would lead to a war of enslavement and destruction against Slavic lands in the East and to a total destruction of Jewish and other peoples. Nevertheless, we now know that Hitler

started immediately with plans of war and destruction.

The politically and economically unsettled situation of the European post-World War I period favored the rise of demagogues and dictators, such as Lenin, Mussolini, Stalin or Franco. They were at the time an integral part of Europe's – our – history. So we can perhaps state that: European history explains Hitler. However, it is perhaps better to say that Hitler used given historical occasions for his evil purposes. In this sense, Hitler's evil political genius explains recent European history.

Obviously, there are no absolute explanations for historical events. If in my presentation of the Holocaust I stress psychological conditions (social image, self-deception, power of illusions) this in no way is meant to neglect historical and political forces. Psychology and history are closely related as each child develops and constructs a social image (as sketched in Chapter 1). A strict separation between them can only be done artificially for certain limited purposes. In Hitler's case, this split is particularly inappropriate since his illusory ideas and political actions literally *made* history. Starting immediately after the end of the First World War, the actions of the Nazi party contributed considerably to the social chaos that in turn favored his rise to power. After 1933 Hitler realized that the victorious powers of World War I not only did not want another war but, with the horrors of the war a recent memory, could not imagine that anyone could want another war. This gave him an incredible political advantage which Hitler exploited to the fullest.

The "betrayal" of Munich in September 1938 is an instance of Hitler's pressure tactics. There the powers handed over to Germany those parts of Czechoslovakia which had a substantial German minority, without Hitler having to fire a shot. They were soft on him not only out of fear of another war. They were also afraid of socialist movements within their own countries and feared Communism, in particular the murderous dictatorship of Bolshevism as practiced in the Soviet Union. By 1938 Stalin had already murdered many millions of people for political reasons. The Western powers were aware of Hitler's hate of Bolshevism. Perhaps they subconsciously hoped his lust for war would be directed there and that somehow Nazism and Bolshevism would destroy each other.

Yet in August 1939 Hitler was able to come to an agreement with Stalin by signing a pact of mutual non-aggression and friendship in which the two dictators secretly agreed to divide Poland and the three Baltic states between them. Imagine the psychology of these two former arch enemies, engaging each other in a game of deception and self-deception for nearly two years! With this pact, Hitler was finally ready to have his first act of the war against Slavic people by invading Poland in September 1939. Stalin, careful as ever, waited a few days for France and Britain to declare war against Germany before grabbing his part of the spoil.

These spectacular diplomatic and military successes led Hitler to misjudge his potential adversaries both East and West as weak and spineless. And then in May 1940, his sentiment of invincibility was vastly increased, when after a lightening attack (*Blitzkrieg*) of only a few weeks, France capitulated and Britain made a hasty retreat. Now all the losses of the previous war were avenged and recuperated. But as was pointed out earlier, Hitler had always set his mind on conquering the East for the purpose of German colonization and domination.

So in June 1941 Hitler launched a sudden attack against his "ally," the Soviet Union, convinced he could in a second short lightening attack destroy the Communist empire. Stalin acted as if he had not seen or did not want to see the massive war preparations that were occurring right before his eyes. He seemed totally surprised and unprepared. In four months the German army was before the gates of Moscow and Leningrad. Hitler in his destructiveness talked of letting the millions in these cities starve and freeze to death; so he would not have to deal with them as prisoners of war. Then he would raze the cities to the ground.

However, the lightening strike in the end did not work. Russia did not capitulate. That winter of 1941 Hitler's armies had their first setback and Britain came to the help of the Soviet Union with critical war material. Before the war Britain had abhorred an alliance with the Soviet Union (and for that reason Stalin found it prudent to come to an agreement with Hitler). But now after France's capitulation, with Britain alone carrying on the war against Germany, it was as desperate for welcoming allies against Hitler as was the Soviet Union. Nevertheless, for another year Germany managed to retain and expand somewhat the advance into Russia's heart land. Finally in the battle of Stalingrad, November 1942 - February 1943, with about a million Germans killed and half a million prisoners taken, Germany suffered a huge defeat of its best troops. From then on it was clear to all who were not totally blinded by Hitler's self-deception that his plan of conquest in the East could not succeed. Germans in general knew it too. But under the Nazi propaganda and with the fear and terror of the actual war situation – notably fear of Russian vengeance – they would not dare to talk or even *want* to think about it. Can you understand that psychologically the Germans could honestly feel that they had no way out?

The time of Germany's critical defeat at Stalingrad was also the time of Pearl Harbor, the beginning of Japan's attack against America and the European colonial powers in South East Asia. Hitler then made it easy for president Roosevelt, in opposition to strong isolationist sentiment, to join the European war. Without coordinating his war with Japan's war, Hitler declared war against America! Even so, the German intruders into Eastern Europe as yet had plenty of military power to fight for over two years a determined rear-guard action against the unrelenting pressure of the Soviet fighting forces.

Above all and in spite of the deteriorating military situation, the Nazis pursued another war aim of which we shall speak in the next chapters: the total destruction of the Jews. With renewed vigor they attempted to kill as many Jews as was possible, as if to compensate in that field of destruction for what they were losing on the field of battle. In this way the Nazi fanatics could continue to pretend they were winning the war. In their mad ideology, the killing of Jews was seen as victory. For Hitler, defeat was unimaginable. To accept defeat amounted to total self-destruction. So it was in Nazi Germany's total destruction that the war ended. Against all reality testing, Hitler forced the Germans to continue fighting literally to the last man. His madness required the death of additional millions on both sides of the war until in May 1945 he finally killed himself in the midst of a destroyed Germany.

Psychological Reflections

In this chapter we have briefly sketched how wars became a normal part of human history and how the nature of wars in Europe changed from the late Middle Ages onward. We focused on the long "peace" between the powers of Europe during the far from peaceful period from 1815 to 1914. All the main actors of the Nazi period had their childhood during the end of that period. They experienced the nationalistic achievements of a newly created German empire and then the cataclysmic upheaval of World War I and the German defeat and its aftermath.

This set the stage for the rise to power of a political genius who attracted the dispirited masses in Germany by the positive force *and* the negative destructiveness of his nationalism and racism. We have presented Hitler's war in the East as a war of destruction such as had not been seen before in Europe. In the preceding chapter we discussed Hitler's racism of destruction that fueled Hitler's war-making. Next we shall turn in some detail to the specific deeds of destruction that lend Hitler's war a historically new and world-menacing quality.

To conclude this chapter on Hitler's war of destruction I present now a concrete example of war-related illusions and self-deceptions that kept Hitler's war going. At a time when literally all was lost, the person I am quoting still held to the bizarre enemy image that was imposed on Nazi Germany while denying the unbearable reality of Germany's defeat. This is taken from a letter home of an SS officer stationed in Hungary, not three months before the end of the war:

"This is a hard time – but I am convinced that we shall make it – for all this cannot have been to no purpose and to have the world go down in Jewish-Bolshevik chaos. It's hard, damned hard, and when all is over we'll just collapse. But we must and shall prevail, even if in the last attack we all hobble along on canes. When one hears and sees how the Russians live, a shiver runs down the spine and hot, flaming hot hatred erupts with which one wants to

destroy this brood of hell. One cannot forget that. It is horrendous, and a person at home who has not yet grasped this and goes after personal interests should be drowned. Surely, it is the last phase of the war and the decision is near. The Almighty will grant us victory for which we have been fighting for so long. We are unspeakably fatigued and would be thankful for a victorious peace; but there can be no slackening until victory is ours" (vonWesternhagen. p. 45).

I can hardly imagine how the fanatic author of these lines could have endured life after the war. In fact, he was killed in an air attack three weeks after he wrote these lines. These were the words of one who lived in the illusion, writes his daughter vonWesternhagen (1991), "of representing the good, attempting to defeat the bad." As a "respectable" SS man, the daughter thought, her father acted in good conscience in the "antechamber of hell." Yet she had no doubt that he was well aware of the atrocities perpetrated in the Nazi hell. However, they did not bother his insulated conscience. His mental world, she wrote, included and accepted in self-deception "the work of destruction common to all who shared the knowing, doing, acting, and killing in one global megalomaniac intention" (p. 59). How, she wondered, could one explain the "criminal with a good conscience?"

None of the usual historical or personal "explanations" could provide inner peace to the troubled daughter of this "respectable" criminal. Until it dawned on her: In asking the question, How is this possible? we already make the preconscious presumption of astonishment. And in this astonishment we exclude and excuse ourselves from the bad. In that case, she writes, the world remains "what it had been before" (p. 60). And I may add, this is true whether that question comes from the side of perpetrators (as in this case), victims, bystanders or distant outsiders. Our task is, she believes, "to see ourselves in what we see in others as evil and finally to accept it as ours. To want to expunge it is apparently a fateful deception that leads to the very opposite ... Perhaps we must want the evil so as not to be attached to it" (p. 84).

I shall try to reword the above in my own words. To somewhat comprehend the evil that was perpetrated in Hitler's war of destruction and in the Holocaust, the author thinks, we must not be satisfied with saying that *others, other evil persons* did the evil. We have to realize that these *others* are part of *us*. We have to imagine the Nazi evil as something done by *us*, as something *we would be able to do*. More than that, we must imagine *us, ourselves, wanting to do the evil, wanting the evil*. Only by reacting in this way, this daughter of a perpetrator thinks, can we comprehend the Nazi evil not merely as something that we recognize in us but also as something to which we are not attached. This, I think, is a precious insight that can help us in the next two chapters where we shall attempt to think and speak the unthinkable and the unspeakable.

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4. On Nazi Deeds of Destruction

Overview: Within the context of a war of destruction against the Soviet Union Hitler and his Nazi followers set about to perpetrate the Holocaust, that is, the slaughter of all Jews in their power. We learn about the steps that in rapid succession led from war-related killings in 1939 to the destruction-killing practiced first by police troops and ultimately in the death camps.

In previous chapters we have attempted to grasp the psychology of Nazism under the perspective of a destruction of humankind. That destruction in turn was based on a racism of destruction and a war of destruction. In denying to certain groups of people the quality of being human and in aiming at their total destruction, the Nazis stepped over a threshold of evil which for the first time in history touched the core of humankind. We have also spoken of illusion and self-deception as basic psychological competencies that made the evolutionary emergence of humans and human societies possible. These competencies too can explain that the SS man, mentioned at the end of the preceding chapter, could participate in the Nazi deeds of evil without connecting them to a dimension of morality. In his illusion and self-deception he could consider himself a "respectable" person who, as his daughter wrote, "did his best ... who wanted nothing as much as to do and to be good."

In our usual societal image, war and the defense of country have generally been an area insulated from personal morals. The combination of supreme military and political values encouraged the exclusion of a moral dimension. Hitler, like many statesmen before him, used this constellation for his demagogic purposes. Through lying and deceit, he was a master in presenting deeds of destruction as necessary war-related operations.

War and Morals

Nevertheless, European history knows of quasi-moral (e.g., the "just war" theory) and quasi-legal conventions (e.g., Geneva conventions) that were officially recognized by the warring powers. In this connection, it pays to remember how easily and quickly at the beginning of World War II the area of what was militarily allowed was extended beyond a previous limit. It was a movement in the direction of total destruction (as predicted 150 years earlier by the philosopher Kant). In this chapter we turn to the Nazi atrocities that were perpetrated in the context of Hitler's war of destruction. They are today generally known as "war crimes." However, I would like to talk first of something that until recently was considered a military crime but today is no longer seen that way. Military conventions proscribed direct attack on nonmilitary persons or objects. This custom prevailed for centuries, up to the time when technical progress made possible new kinds of weapons and a new kind of war. You could no longer (or did no longer want to) make the easy distinction between military

and civilian (nonmilitary) objects. I refer here to aerial attacks on civilian targets.

The German Nazis and the Italian Fascist first practiced air attacks over European cities in the Spanish civil war (1936-1939) and then continued with them in World War II as a normal strategy of their warfare. Naturally, their opponents – after the briefest moment of moral outrage – did not really have any choice but to do likewise and to attack and destroy open cities with aerial bombardment. In this manner, the above "old-fashioned" rule quickly and early in the war disappeared from the moral consciousness of our time. If necessary, these operations were rationalized and justified by distinguishing "direct" from "indirect" intention or by the idea that air attacks break the "will-to-war" of the enemy population.

This shows you also – and it is indeed a major human tragedy – the weakness and mutability of the frame through which we attempt, if at all, to morally evaluate actions of war. Shall we, in connection with war, ever be able to reach something morally firm (I don't say *absolute*), beyond illusion and self-deceit? Perhaps, as many believe, modern warfare or warfare in general is incompatible with serious morality. In any case, to rescue any morality, we have to start a long time *before the outbreak of a war*; once *in war*, it is too late. These reflections, I believe, are today in view of the potential of nuclear bombs – a direct continuation of the first German bomber attacks – of more than academic interest.

Hitler's War Crimes

The Nazi attacks against Poland in September 1939 and then against the Soviet Union in June 1941 were the beginning of their horrible deeds of destruction, deeds that are today justifiably recognized as "crimes against humanity." Here is an injunction of destruction, promulgated personally by Hitler to the high command of the German army just prior to the invasion of Poland: "Genghis Khan, eagerly and with joy in his heart, had millions of women and men slaughtered. History regards him only as the great imperial founder ... I have sent my death head companies East with the task of murdering without mercy men, women and children of the Polish race or language. Only in this manner shall we gain the living space that we need. Who, after all, speaks today about the destruction of the Armenians?" (Davies, p. 909)

The uncanny in that speech is not only Hitler's murderous racism, but also the power he had over his generals to talk them into accepting his view. For them, it was too late not to go along. And indeed, with just a few exceptions, they all collaborated, at the least indirectly, with the enslavement and murder of the war in the East. In order to understand how humans could do those Nazi misdeeds of destruction, we must, I believe, as co-humans show empathy with their psychology. Otherwise as we said at the end of the last chapter, we can only reject the perpetrators as if they were some inhumane others -- and thus we can never really understand them or learn from them.

Picture those generals, nearly all gentlemen of the old Prussian school, proud of the

traditions that had made Prussia the leading state in a unified Germany. They are hearing the orders of their highest commander to do misdeeds that go against their professional conscience. We are told that they accepted the injunction in ice-cold silence. Of course, if many had called out in shock that this command implies a serious trespass of traditional military customs, Hitler would have to give in or, at the least, the German army would not have collaborated in the misdeeds. However, the possibility of this type of open confrontation was not part of the societal image of German generals. Consequently, they could do nothing but remain silent -- and disregard their conscience. Is this behavior understandable? We like to think that the generals are morally responsible, but for what? For the Nazi misdeeds or perhaps more accurately, for having a politically and morally deficient societal image?

Now, imagine millions of German soldiers who in the fall of 1941 experienced the first unexpected strong defense against their attack and the hardship of the Russian winter. The general of their army, Marshal von Reichenau (an uncommonly enthusiastic Nazi among the generals) had just sent them this order: "The main objective of this campaign against the Jewish-Bolshevik system is to totally destroy the potential for power and extirpate Asian influence on European cultural life. The soldier must understand the need for severe but just atonement of the Jewish subhumans. Only thus can we carry out our historic task and once and for all liberate the German people from the Jewish-Asiatic danger" (Yahil, p.257). These were the fabricated enemy images that encouraged the soldiers to regard the war in the East as other than a conventional war. It was to be a war of destruction in which there were no customary moral limits. If along with the constraints and the terror of the war, you recognize this ideology as the psychological background of the atrocities (even if only half-consciously held and assented to), you can begin to understand the insulation of the misdeeds from a moral conscience. For us who are living in an open society, it is just this insulation of an action from its moral import that strikes us as incomprehensible.

Finally, imagine millions of Germans who in February 1943, after the catastrophic defeat at Stalingrad (which basically implied that the war against the Soviet Union could not be won), followed Hitler's speech on the radio: "The German army which has again fought in outstanding fashion this winter, is conducting a bitter struggle against the global threat that the banks of New York and London devised in conjunction with the Bolshevik Jews in Moscow. Think what would have awaited our people, and Europe as a whole, had we not proclaimed the war cry of the nationalist-socialist revolution. This revolution restored the soul of the German people and gave it the inner strength that now enables it not only to check the world Jewish danger but also, at long last, to destroy it ... Truly, this struggle will not end, as they intend, in the destruction of Aryan humanity but in the liquidation of Jewry in Europe. Then our movement's conception will become the shared asset of all nations ... This war will prove beyond any doubt that

plutocracy and Bolshevism are the same and that the eternal objective of all Jews is to plunder all nations and to subjugate them as slaves of their international guild of criminals" (Yahil, p.405).

The idea of an "Asiatic danger" can be found as a vague content in the European and particularly the German societal image for a long time – as it can also be found in U.S. history. However, in Hitler's program this danger was accentuated into a life-and-death struggle of destruction. And behind the deadly dangers he always saw the Jews as a collective source of all evil influences touching the well-being of humankind. In that speech Hitler made these equivalences, first for the East: Russia = Bolshevism = Jewry, then for the West: Capitalism = Jewry = Bolshevism. Clearly, in Hitler's mind the total annihilation of Jews was now as much a chief objective of the war as the capture of half a continent and the enslavement of its people.

What would the millions of Germans who heard this speech think and feel? What did they do, what *could* they do in response? Did they recognize the utter madness of the speech and the madness of their leader? Did they realize that the war was basically lost? And were they also vaguely aware that a second war aim has been practically achieved and that in the course of the past twelve months the bulk of European Jewry had been annihilated? In this mixture of feelings of some measure of pride (past military victories) and fear of what the future would bring (present defeat and the eventual vengeance of the victors), was there room to take a principled stand against the destructive madness and against the horrible deeds flowing from it? Psychologically, this was hardly possible.

The German societal image of the Asiatic danger, of Germanic racial superiority, of duty and obedience to legitimate authority, of the glory and the heroism of war, these and similar inner images had first made the Germans susceptible to large parts of Hitler's program. And when in the course of the war these images took on the horrendous reality of mass murder it was too late to step aside and take a stand. The best that many Germans thought they could do was to passively retreat into what they called "inner emigration." This kept them, as they hoped, morally free from an active going along or collaborating with the Nazi misdeeds. At the same time, this step was also a conscious wanting-not-to-know, a not-wanting-to-seriously-concern-oneself or question-oneself. But as we discussed in Chapter 1, without this concern, a principled stand cannot be achieved. Here we can also recognize one root of the widespread taboo that to this day falsifies and denies the recollection and acknowledgment of the Nazi misdeeds.

The Nazi Killing of the Jews

As we now turn to a description of those deeds of destruction we shall learn in what sense they have a quality of evil that can be considered historically new. Since the dawn of the modern age and in spite of continuous warfare in Europe, we do not read of wholesale and

government-sponsored massacres. Here we shall proceed in roughly chronological order and note the time when specific Nazi crimes were first perpetrated. This should help us in our attempt to picture the concrete situation of the crimes. As I suggested earlier, the turning point from "ordinary" political crimes -- if the gulags of Stalin can be called "ordinary" crimes -- to the Nazi crimes of human destruction was Hitler's attack of Poland.

You heard earlier how already in September 1939 Hitler commanded his generals to proceed with the conquest of Poland by means of a war of destruction that was to be different from the usual European wars. In the regions occupied by German forces, millions of Jews were forced into overcrowded ghettos. There the Jews, living on a starvation diet, organized themselves as best as they could into functioning communities while awaiting their further destiny. [By that time, the Nazi leadership had not yet decided how to deal with the millions of Jews that had come under their power.] With the attack against the Soviet Union in June 1941 the war of destruction took on its full horrendous scope. The Nazi plan was now clear. On the one hand, through enslavement and mass murder to conquer a vast region of Eastern Europe for settlement of the German *Herrenvolk*; and on the other hand, through the "Final Solution" to combine this crime on the Slavic peoples with the total elimination of European Jews.

To accomplish mass murder, reserve troops were assigned to the German armies. Their task was, as soon as a place had been conquered, to collect all persons known as leading Bolsheviks or Jews and to take them to some remote spot where they were shot. Since Jews were automatically regarded as Bolsheviks these operations were in the main a cleansing and slaughter of Jews. In the beginning, the Nazi propaganda explicitly connected Jews with dangerous partisans to make it appear that these murders were a defense against possible enemies.. Within months, in the enthusiasm of an expected early victory and the conquest of more and more regions with large Jewish populations, the German leadership greatly enlarged the murder operations of the reserve troops. And here the official lie of Jews as active partisans was no longer needed and we have the beginning of the crime of killing Jews simply because they were humans. Men, women, but primarily a great number of children and of old and sick people were slaughtered -- since by then the majority of healthy Jews had time to flee with Russian civilians from the approaching Germans.

You can see then that indeed a moral threshold was crossed in the fall of 1941, from operations of war to operations of destruction -- still done, however, within a war zone. Try to imagine the extent of this killing and the method used. It is estimated that the reserve troops killed well over one millions Jews in the Eastern regions occupied by the Germans. The notorious mass murder of Babi-Yar, a place near Kiev, in November 1941, counted about 34,000 Jews. In the middle of the night the victims were marched to a remote spot -- so that the local population did not need to witness or even know about the murder and could accept the official

lies about deportation. The Jews were then commanded to dig deep ditches, to take off their clothes and put them down in neat order and finally to line up naked at the edge of the ditches. There one by one they were killed through a shot in the back of the head. They then fell on their own into the ditch on top of the corpses already lying in it. Here is an item reflecting "German efficiency:" To make the best use of the available space the killers devised the "sardine method" by alternating the head- and foot-direction of the corpses.

To comprehend somewhat the psychology of the killers and bystanders you have to realize the active and quickly changing war situation where the Nazi leadership painted Jewish persons as being dangerous partisans and Bolsheviks. Different from Western Europe, potential occasions for resistance and rescue were minimal in the East. Moreover, together with the terror of the present war and memory of the recent Stalin dictatorship, the "ordinary" antisemitism prevalent throughout the region sufficed to dull any impulse toward active resistance or ways of rescue. On the contrary, in many regions local people eagerly participated in the murder and looting of Jews and Jewish property to the point of having their own killing troops.

As to the German reserve troops, after they got used to a killing that they could deceive themselves as being war-related, the further step to pure destruction-killing was not so notable: : killing is killing. Some murderers, treating their daily Jew hunt as a sport, compared daily totals. Soldiers of the regular German army and also local police units joined at times in the "fun" of the reserve troops. Finally, the daily Nazi propaganda regarding the "Jewish-Asiatic" life-and-death danger, awareness of the present devastating war and a daily generous ration of alcohol did the rest to make most killers feel comfortable with what they were doing.

Even so, the hundred of thousands of murdered Jews were only a part of the many millions of Jews in Nazi-occupied lands in the East. Emigration for Jews was no longer a possibility. It was clear to the Nazis that neither maltreatment or starvation in the ghettos nor the killing operations of the reserve troops could bring about the desired *total* destruction of the Jewish people. Apart from this, the daily person-to-person killing eventually had serious mental repercussions. One district commander complained: "These men were shaken, they are finished for the rest of their lives and would become either neurotics or savages" (Yahil, p. 259).

In that fall of 1941, when the hoped-for lightening strike against the Soviet Union came to a halt but a later victory still seemed possible, when the first destruction operations against Jews were perpetrated in war zones, that also was the time when the Nazis in Berlin seriously thought about a different resolution of what they called the "Jewish problem". The killing of millions of people is no small task whether as a technical, managerial, psychological or public relations problem. Once the killing had been decided, ways had to be found to put it into practice without too much damage to the personal mental health of the killers or the good

reputation of so-called German "culture". For this purpose, models were available from the euthanasia program where the Nazis for the first time systematically killed thousands of persons.

Beginning on a large scale early in 1940, a few months after the start of World War II, more than 70,000 German persons with bodily or mental impairments received what the Nazis euphemistically called "special treatment." In the course of experimenting with various medical means of producing death, poison gas was found to work efficiently and reliably.. However, the medical authorities could not convincingly lie about the killing ("I regret to inform you...") to relatives who lived nearby. Convinced that their loved ones did not die a natural death they voiced collective protests. Finally in August 1941, when a bishop spoke out in open opposition, Hitler officially stopped these killing operations.

In the meantime in July 1941 a first extermination camp was established at Chelmo (near Łódź) in which Jewish victims were gassed in motor vans. Subsequently to save expensive personal transport the vans were brought to the victims. This method also minimized the personal involvement of killing. But the results were too uneven in that the killing was not reliably successful. Finally, in September 1941, the Nazis for the first time experimented with the poison they had previously used for the medical killings, the gas zyclon-B. Russian prisoners at Auschwitz were the first persons to be killed by gas. Here then is the beginning of the mass industrial killing that was eventually done in six death camps in Poland. Auschwitz was the place where the killing had its largest scope (around 1 and 1½ million) and raged continuously for nearly three years. – As an aside, notice the crime of killing prisoners of war. Eventually 3½ million Soviet prisoners of war will die in German concentration camps.

January 1942 was the date of the infamous conference at Wannsee, a suburb of Berlin. There Eichman and other key personnel of the various branches of the Nazi bureaucracy came together in a brief meeting of a few hours to discuss and coordinate how to rid Europe of its entire Jewish population – at that time the goal of killing was no longer discussed, it was already taken for granted. Nor was there any need to refer to alleged reasons of war – this type of propaganda was for the immediate perpetrators and bystanders further down the hierarchy. Rather, in good bureaucratic fashion they worked out relevant details, such as which specific bureaucracies would be responsible for the building and the running of the death camps, or for the rail transport. On the basis of previous use in German hospitals and with Russian prisoners of war, they approved the use of zyclon-B gas and the cremation of the corpses. It is psychologically interesting to note that in this connection a special vocabulary had developed through which – again in a kind of self-deception – the moral reality of the misdeeds was neutralized, e.g., *special treatment* for "killing", *figure* for "corpse". In that impersonal idiom the participants at Wannsee discussed and sealed the horrendous fate of the about five million European Jews who at that time were still alive.

Now begun in earnest the total destruction of the Jewish life and culture which for over 300 years had flourished in the regions of Poland and Western Russia.. In Warsaw and other bigger cities Jewish ghettos were established from where surviving Jews were eventually sent to the death camps. However, for the hundred of Yiddish *shtetls* throughout the pacified regions a kind of lightning strike was prepared by the reserve troops (which previously had gone about the killing of Jews in war zones). This systematic destruction of Jewish villages went on from March 1942 to February 1943.

For some of the killers July 13, 1942 was a decisive day (Browning, 1992). With no special preparations, they had just arrived in Poland as part of a reserve police battalion. Early in the morning of that day they heard the order of their commander that all the Jews in the village of Józefów were to be killed. Try to picture this situation. The "weak" commander, Major Trapp, was visibly shaken when without preparation the night before he received the order to kill. So that morning he gave his men the option not to take part in the killing. In response, there was some hesitation in the ranks and two or three men excused themselves; but at the end of the day about 1500 Jewish corpses were lying in the ditches which the victims had to dig before being killed. On the next occasion there was even less hesitation to do the killing. As I said before, the transition from murder of war to murder of destruction was for these men no significant event. Yet as a historical moment, in July 1942 a moral threshold was here crossed.

We have mentioned earlier that this personal killing had psychological repercussions, apart from the fact that it could never reach all the millions the Nazis wanted to kill. Thus following the Wannsee Conference, the Nazis in 1942 established specific "factories" of deaths, notably at Auschwitz and five other Polish towns. This is where the masses of the Jews were sent to be gassed and cremated, first Jews from the ghettos nearby (including the largest one in Warsaw), and eventually from all the German-controlled parts of Europe. How many Jews did the Nazis kill? It is estimated that about two thirds of the 5-6 million Jews killed by the Nazis ended their lives in these death factories. In any case, do not focus exclusively on numbers. We know that Stalin had many more people murdered than Hitler. These, however, were executed as "enemies of the state" for allegedly political actions. Murder for political or military reasons has been part of the nightmare of history for a long time.

With the Nazis, however, a new horror came into our world, namely, the planned destruction of humans whose only crime was their human existence. As I have insisted before, this horror – which included the killing of children, the old and the sick – attacks the very nature of humankind and human societies. This is why the Nazi misdeeds cannot easily be assimilated to the "ordinary" political killings that have been and still are a sorry part of our history.. We would prefer to let the Nazi misdeeds lie in our subconscious as uniquely incomprehensible and somehow not real. However, precisely because this horror concerns not

merely Jews but humankind as a whole, we must not stop here. Hard as it is, we must make the attempt and the effort to see and to feel these misdeeds as co-humans, as if done by ourselves. This is of course, as you know, the major aim of this entire work. There is no other way to really assimilate and comprehend the Holocaust.

Life in the Death Camps

The word "life" here is a misnomer. For human life always presupposes some form of a human context. But the context that these camps provided was literally a context of death. Life in the context of death cannot really be called life. Nevertheless, we must talk about it with whatever inadequate words are available to us and describe briefly the industrial method of mass killings, the transport of the victims to the camps, and the daily routine in the death camps. In the next chapter we shall turn to the specific psychological horror of pleasure in destruction, associated with the death camps..

The selected victims, in groups of some hundreds, were led to a building where for purported reasons of health they were to take a shower. Their hair had been cut before and now they had to take off everything they had on. Large doors were then opened through which the naked people were hurriedly pushed and tightly packed into a big bare room with rows of what looked like shower heads on the ceiling. Through these showers, after the doors were closed, deadly gas was released upon the crowd. For a minute or so the choking victims went through their death struggle while outside a small orchestra of Jewish musicians played cheerful music, drowning out the cries of agony for the next group of victims.

Then doors on the other side of the building were opened. Through these the dead bodies could conveniently be pushed into lower lying containers which as ovens were then heated to high temperatures. The smell of burnt flesh spread over the camp. All that concretely remained of the hundreds of persons who had entered the building was a heap of ash and some small burned bones. In this manner, the Nazis in Auschwitz could eventually kill up to 8,000 - 10,000 people daily.

When a transport of victims arrived in the camp, they were in a condition close to death, caused either by the ghetto life (where daily hundreds fell down dead from hunger, cold or illness) or the long rail journey of several days. On this journey they were locked in box cars, tightly packed together like cattle destined for slaughter, with barely enough room to stand. While the train slowly made its way to the death camp, the victims were left with no water, no food, no toilet, no windows, in cold or hot weather.

Once arrived at the camp, there was perhaps a hurried selection of the few who seemed healthy enough to work, all others were to be gassed and burned the day of arrival. Thus, one day during the last months of the war a transport of 2,800 Jews from Hungary arrived at Auschwitz. Of these 400 were selected as "workers" whereby their death sentence was

postponed for a few months. The witness who at selection had lost his entire family was the sole survivor of that particular transport by the time Auschwitz was liberated (Langer, p.91).

It is not easy to describe life in the camp. We have no right words nor appropriate societal images. As we discussed earlier, we humans have become what we are today in the historical formation of human societies. The inmates of Auschwitz, totally starved and mistreated, hardly looked like humans and, moreover, lived in a context of *almost total societal destruction*. They had no social frame or bonds through which they could keep their humanity psychologically alive. This is the deep reason why I call the Nazi ideology uniquely *destructive of humanity*. In this context, it is almost impossible to speak of morals, customs or reasonable expectations. "Life" there, if one can call it so, was a coincidence of chance and arbitrary happenings that could not be placed within conceivable societal images.

As an illustration, we spoke earlier about the selection of "workers." However, these workers were systematically starved to death or arbitrarily killed. The "work" apparently did not have a serious purpose or goal. Similarly, toward the end of the war, the Germans had to flee from the approaching Soviet army and as they abandoned the camps, they attempted to destroy the evidence of their horrendous crimes. Partly for this reason, the Nazis organized the remaining famished inmates and forced them, in the depth of winter, to march by foot for days and weeks toward a new camp. The official pretense was to relocate a work force. However, anyone who could not keep up with these death marches was shot on the spot and only a small proportion of the ten thousands was able to survive the march.

If we attempt to imagine what life was like for the prisoners in these death camps we would soon realize that this attempt is somehow out of place. As I mentioned frequently before, human life always implies the context of a society within which a life has meaning and sense. Our mind is alive with social play and imaginary stories from our earliest childhood. Throughout adult life this mental activity continues in what I have called a person's "social image." We learned that this is the psychological basis of our societies. Thus the individual story of a person eventually becomes part of the collective story of a society – story becomes hi-story.

What the prisoners had to experience cannot be called "life" and so cannot become a "story." Surviving witnesses tell us that there is no bridge, no connection, between Auschwitz and human societies. For this reason, the liberation from the death camps was for most survivors not, as we would like to think, a liberating or even enriching experience, but often a painful encounter. Survivors suffered the burden of non-communication.. How can you share something that you yourself cannot grasp as a story? And if you cannot share, how can you relate to others? Listen to the testimony of one witness.

A group of inmates, the witness narrates, was working in a ditch that was filling up with

water. Some SS guards were making fun of one worker, known as Isaac the Strong. They ordered him to grab the heads of the co-workers, one after the other, and hold them under water until they were dead. "Finally they also ordered him to kill his own father. In the act of drowning his father, Isaac went berserk and started to scream. So one of the SS guards shot Isaac in the water" (Langer, p.89). The witness of this incident is aware that it was pure chance that he did not share the fate of the workers. Today, he still sees the scene before his inner eye and feels guilty. No meaningful historical model, no comforting saving frame is available to him by which he can grasp the scene as a "human story." However, why would the witness feel guilty? Apart from his own chance survival (survivor guilt), there is a deed so horrendous that we humans today recoil from making it part of our "story." This probably causes a particularly painful emotion that may feel like guilt. We too, as we read this testimony, witness the horrors of the Holocaust. Perhaps what we should feel is not so much guilt, but rather shame and responsibility for being co-humans. And we should act in response to this feeling.

On this point, there is a striking comment from Primo Levi, one of the few survivors, reflecting on the shame that may perhaps lead us toward a constructive response: "They [Russians entering Auschwitz] did not greet us, nor did they smile; they seemed oppressed not only by compassion, but by a confused restraint, which sealed their lips and bound their eyes to the funereal scene. It was that shame we knew so well, the shame that drowned us after the selections, and every time we had to watch, or submit to, some outrage; the shame ... that the just man experiences at another man's crime; the feeling of guilt that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably into the world of things that exist, and that our will for good should have proved too weak or null, and should not have availed in defense" (quoted in Langer, p.94).

Shame is one of the primary emotions that relates us to the society at large. In child development it is called a self-conscious emotion and appears around two to three years of age, at a time when children first form a societal image. That means, they begin to grasp that they belong to a human society and they show this in their play, fantasy, and peer interactions. Their "self" or "self-image" is a part of what I have called here a person's "social image."

It seems congruent that the emotion of shame -- through which children first acknowledge a societal frame -- should also be a first positive response to the destruction of the societal frame wrought in the Nazi death camps. In the final part of this work we shall have more to say about responsibility and shame as a positive response to the horror of the Nazi destruction.

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5. On the Nazi Pleasure in Destruction

Overview: The Nazi ideology of destruction encouraged people to openly express murderous sadistic drives – pleasure in hate and in inflicting pain and death – that are commonly inhibited and sublimated. For those directly involved in the slaughter of Jews, unspeakable crimes and misdeeds frequently were occasions of pleasure. Quite generally, part of the mass appeal of Hitler's oratory was the human fascination with death and destruction.

The destructive madness of the Nazi policies could not have been realized unless a certain strong tendency toward destruction is part of our psychological make-up. Understandably, this is not a pleasant or popular subject, but Nazism is indeed incomprehensible without this evil side of our psychology. In general, scholars have preferred to pay attention to “rational” and pleasant aspects of psychology and to consider evil aspects, if at all, as decidedly abnormal. In spite of his controversial status, Freud is still the only leading psychologist who can give us some guidance into the dark sides of our psyche. Thus without subscribing to an all out acceptance of Freud's theories, I shall use some of his concepts to help us understand the Nazi evil. In this connection, it is worth remembering that Freud developed his psychological theories in the same social milieu of Vienna around World War I that also nourished the evil ideology of Hitler.

Freud's mature psychology postulated the interplay of a life- and a death-instinct in all human conduct. The former drives behavior in the direction of affirmation and expansion of life, such as love, friendship and ideals; the latter in the direction of negation of life, in the form of defense, aggression, destruction and ultimately self-destruction. However, no action by itself expresses just one single instinct. Rather any significant action, whether individual or collective, is a mixture of these two basic drives. Freud envisaged human life as a constant struggle between the drives. Moreover, it would be a mistake to equate the life drive with moral goodness and the death drive with badness, as if the disappearance of aggression would be a desirable end state. Life in society consist of power, aggression and competition as much as of love, friendship and cooperation. It is a question of balance. With regard to the moral quality of life, it is the overall direction of these two drives that is decisive.

We can observe the expressions of these drives in early infancy. In relating to others, children develop the psychological powers through which they become active participants in society. In Chapter 1 I focused on the imaginative competence. It empowers children to construct a mental world of desired objects -- mental objects or symbols -- and share them with others. In children's relations with peers, we can literally observe the psychological origin of

societal life. Without enlarging on societal speech which is universally recognized as basic to society, I pointed out the lesser noted though equally remarkable abilities of imaginative pretense, illusion and self-deception that children around age two are beginning to develop. These are general symbolic powers and like language they are characteristic features of all human societies.

Now I want to add to this model of man the image-maker the indispensable motivational component that drives children to construct mental images in the first place. In Freud's language, children literally fall in love with the mental objects they create and they use these mental objects in establishing a measure of social power over others. The creating of mental objects – whether in the form of mental images or societal speech – indicates primarily the life drive, whereas the establishing of social power goes with the aggression drive. When in the concrete context of social life this interplay of drives does not easily or consistently lead to the desired goal, a child's resulting frustration can turn into destruction and self-destruction. This is where badness and pleasure in destruction comes into “normal” human psychology.

Pleasure in Destruction

In Chapter 1 I have characterized humans as the animal that can deceive not only others but itself. And now I want to add the motivational or emotional side to this picture. It will lead to a stark conclusion: We humans are the animal that can take pleasure both in deceiving and in destroying others and ourselves.

Note that in child development the life and death drives are at first exercised in fantasy and imagination. In contrast to external movements and actions, at this mental level there are no built-in biological constraints. These constraints must ultimately come from an innate positive "desire for society," that is, a desire for being a constructive part of society. And that implies the desire for sharing and for mutual acknowledgment.. This innate desire underlies the development of morality, a process of constructive social participation that takes many years to reach maturity. The development of a sense of morality starts with feelings of shame around age two. It is far from completed when children at around seven years of age become capable of a decisive measure of drive control. This control takes the form of what Freud calls “primary repression.” This term is best understood as a developmentally “normal” drive inhibition (in contrast to other forms of repressions that indicate a disturbed psyche). Freud has described two remarkable mental developments that accompany this first period of a child's transition from childhood to adulthood. I am referring here to what Freud calls “sublimation” and “the unconscious.” Both have significant bearings on the eventual morality of the adult person.

First, with regard to sublimation, drive inhibition and drive sublimation go hand in hand. Even as children learn to inhibit socially immature and disruptive drive expressions, at the same

time they learn socially mature ways of expressing their innate drives. Freud calls the first process “primary repression,” the second “sublimation.” Sublimation is thus the primary psychological basis of what we would consider personally mature behavior. In general, the more persons learn to channel their native drives into socially constructive ways the more they are likely to contribute to the well-being of the society. Some of these ways of sublimation are fairly conventional, such as table manners or customs of ordinary conversations. However, Freud explicitly linked sublimation to a person’s creative spontaneity, particularly in the arts.

I hold that creative sublimation is equally at work in other social enterprises, most decisively in what we can call the political culture of a society. In this connection we have talked earlier about the social image of a society which is reflected in its political culture (Chapters 1 and 2). As with the social image, we can also refer to relatively mature or immature features, to morally good and bad aspects, of a culture. When in the Nazi terror we encounter what has been called a “collapse of civilization,” we cannot begin to fathom this social evil unless we can see it as the breakdown of a moral framework. With regard to individuals in a given society, this frame is the work of drive sublimation. The sketch of moral development in the above paragraphs has explained briefly how this sublimation comes about.

Now for many people under Nazism, personal sublimation and an evil social ideology collided. We know the dire result: the evil ideology prevailed and personal morality, at least for a large majority, was compromised. In previous chapters I have attempted to present historical reasons for the weakness of personal morality in the presence of the Nazi evil. However, the most obvious reason has to do with the way sublimation develops. As we have seen, sublimation gets its norms from society. It urges us to act in conformity with the norms and ideals of the society in which we live. Thus, where the social norms themselves become corrupt, as in the Nazi evil of terror and war, sublimation loses its usual compass. We shall refer to this moral dilemma in subsequent discussions, especially in the final Part where we search for an adequate response to the story of the Holocaust.

Turning now from sublimation to the unconscious, the second mental feature associated with the drive inhibition of children around age seven, we ask the question: What happens to the drives that were not sublimated and to the mental world which these drives have constructed throughout the early years of a child’s life? Freud’s answer is: They continue to live and are conserved in the unconscious layers of our mentality, the “unconscious” for short. In other words, the unconscious is the mental location where the child’s mentality lives on.

Why should that be? Because these components comprise the deepest and most intense desires of a person, formed during the years of childhood long before adult consciousness could regulate these drives. The unconscious remains as the chief driving force of our adult life and shapes our individual ideals, values and biases. To a lesser or greater degree, unconscious

contributions are present in all our adult conduct. Quite literally, for good or evil, the unconscious is the final source of what is best as well as what is worst in humans. Thus, if Nazism is rightly seen as most evil and horrible, we must search for the source of this evil in the unconscious layers of the human mind. Any “deep” hate, just as any “deep” love, is mentally connected to a person’s unconscious. Note also that in adulthood the interplay between the life and death drives is primarily acted out at this unconscious level. These drives, apart from innate components (such as physiological or bodily dispositions), are of course massively influenced by the society that engulfs each individual.

All leaders make use of this factor for their political purpose. This was shown in exemplary fashion by the political genius of a Hitler whose mad ideas were largely fueled by unconscious desires of destruction. Due to historical contingencies, briefly discussed in Chapter 2 and further elaborated in the next Part, Hitler's ideology of destruction found a fruitful echo in millions of followers. Hitler could unleash a war of destruction and the slaughter of millions only because, with the German society in his terrorist grip, all too many individuals were found for whom his Nazi society burst open the floodgates of drive inhibitions. In Freud’s language: What had been repressed became un-repressed. What may have been something normal, a secret, scarcely noticed pleasure in destruction before, became now for hundreds of thousands of Nazi collaborators a socially sanctioned open way of acting. During the Nazi period pleasure in destruction and murder became not only socially acceptable but legally approved and demanded.

Nazi Society of Primitive Impulses

Of course, murder as acceptable within a society or even as demanded by government has been a constant feature of human history (See Chapter 7 on the terrible record of mass murder in our century.) Until fairly recently public lynchings in the American South were tolerated by a white majority and became part of its social image. These crimes speak to the terrible instinct in our psychology of combining pleasure (often open sexual pleasure) and destruction. This deadly combination is exhibited in the crudest form in the following story about an SS man in a Nazi concentration camp (Theweleit, p.301):

The torturer beats the victim with a whip on the bare back and buttocks and makes him count out loud the number of strokes he is receiving. In rhythm with the victim's howling of pain and uncontrolled bodily distortions, the SS man quietly masturbates. Each thrust of the whip with one hand is followed by the stroking of the penis with the other hand. As the climax of sexual tension nears, the torturer's stroking of the penis and whipping of the victim become faster and more vigorous. In due course, the victim's howling gets louder and his convulsions wilder until, crying out and overcome by unbearable pain, he finally loses consciousness. He falls down from the wooden bench astride of which he had been ordered to present his body to

the torturer. At this moment the Nazi *Übermensch* too is engulfed by the lustful convulsions of the orgasm. The victim's body lies naked and prone on the cement floor, occasionally shaken by violent contortions that subside gradually. The torturer arouses himself to an empty smile of satisfaction as he takes notice of the pain of the other body and the pleasure of his own body. He leans for a long time somnolently against the wall.

You ask: What kind of mentally sick or morally depraved person is this sadistic torturer? The answer is, unfortunately, not clear cut. Take the societal context of destruction away, you may be left with a person's imaginative fantasies and desires that are on an unconscious level and need not necessarily have overt evil consequences. The torturer may after the war have escaped justice and lived, as many have done, as an ordinary citizen in a different context without any noticeable devious behavior. For a period, the context of the Nazi death camps may have given him, as it did to countless others, the opportunity to act out the most hidden destructive fantasies. Without it, these may have never come to his full awareness, much less to the overt action of sexual lust associated with sadistic torture.

So while the crime is clear, we shall never know for sure whether we have here a mentally sick and morally depraved person or just an ordinary person adapting to an inhuman context; a person with no excessive sadistic or murderous inclination who found in the death camps the occasion for wreaking unspeakable cruelties. We have heard of similar acts of sexual crimes, occasionally perpetrated in times of war and social upheaval. But the Nazi ideology was in an historically unique way permeated by cruelty and destruction as a matter of policy. And, human psychology being what it is, this destructive ideology enticed untold followers who were unconsciously predisposed to find sexual or otherwise pleasure in cruelty and destruction.

An even more revolting case in this matter is Ilse Koch, the wife of the Auschwitz camp commander, who had lamp shades artistically prepared from the skin of murdered victims. These victims, however, were known to her: she had selected them first from the camp inmates and fattened them up so they could be instruments of her sexual lust. A twofold lust, as the writer (Semprun, 1961, p.) put it: the lust of the act itself and the more permanent pleasure in the art work deriving from the act. Without shame she displayed and admired the lamp shades in her home where her husband and SS officers gathered for social occasions.

From this extreme, of overt sexual crime, to the other extreme, of the "respectable" SS murderers who from their desks ordered and coordinated the killing of millions of victims, there is the variety of more or less random cruelties that formed the everyday life of the death camps. Survivors tell stories of human depravity which were all the more unimaginable as they seemed to serve no other purpose than the pleasure of the person in charge.

Such as, when officers snatched infants from their mother's lap and threw them into the air to be shot in flight -- a kind of hilarious sport for the killers. Or when 200 Mauthausen

inmates were put in a freezing room in mid-winter and given blankets soaked in cold water and forced to wrap themselves in the blankets; they all froze to death (Langer, p.28). What motivated these sadistic criminals? There is probably no better answer than pleasure in acting out the death drive, pleasure in causing and observing the painful destruction of human life. These actions did not seem to be any obvious sexual component. Nevertheless, we have good reasons to believe with Freud that sadistic actions of causing pain form a continuum with the sexual aberrations illustrated earlier. The following continuum can be sketched: Overt perverse sexual actions at one end; overt sadistic actions and destructive actions of “sublimated” sadism by “respectable” Nazis in the middle; and the aroused enthusiasm of millions of Nazi followers at the other end (on this last point see the Chapter 10 on Hitler’s mentality).

We humans are such that sexual desires and sexual energy partake of all of our mental actions, beginning with little children fascinated by some chance object. As I implied earlier, we are the animal that literally falls in love with our mental objects. And as we become active members of our society we learn how to channel our sexual energy into socially approved ways. Human societies could not flourish without the drive and the energy that goes with childhood and carries on into adult life. But neither could societies exist if the infantile pleasure in destruction is not sublimated into positive channels.

Now take a society where common forms of sublimation are no longer expected, where cruelty and destruction against certain people are approved and encouraged. The result is, as we saw, that for many people primitive instinctual impulses of pleasure in destruction are no longer inhibited or sublimated. They are acted out in the open. In fact, Hitler's rise to power is not comprehensible if we do not accept a good measure of fascination with destructiveness in all of us. Hitler and his followers spoke openly of hate and destruction. What is even more important socially and politically, the Nazis could see that thousands, and soon millions of followers were attracted by a philosophy of open destruction. The following is from one of Hitler's early speeches: "For the liberation of a people more is needed than the economic policy, more than industry; if a people is to become free, it needs pride and will power, defiance, hate, hate and once again hate" (New York Review of Books, p.22). In Chapter 10 we shall learn more about the mentality of the person who used the attraction of hate as a potent political strategy. Here was someone who dared to express what for the audience may have been but an unarticulated and subconscious mentality.

This was indeed a unique and historically new form of political hate-philosophy. And due to the open advertising of hate and violence it led, as we learn in this work, to an openly acting out of viciousness and sadistic destructiveness, approved and directed by the Nazi leaders. This sort of sadism was not unknown in our sorry history replete with cases of “death by government” (Chapter 7), but under the Nazis it took on a particularly massive and systematic

form. Starting in 1938, Germany under the Nazi terror became a society of destruction where Nazi gangsters could stop any Jewish citizens and have them perform demeaning tasks, such as cleaning public lavatories or sidewalks. People stood around gleefully and took pleasure in the intended degradation of human dignity. From this pleasure in "harmless" destruction in Vienna 1938 there is a direct continuation, a few years later, to the murderous pleasure exhibited in the death camps of Poland.

The training of SS persons was systematically directed toward making these men unresponsive to any feeling of pity or human compassion. They would routinely spend a period of training in a concentration camp, such as Dachau, where they were shown how to be cruel and sadistic to the prisoners. Those who were seen to be most apt in cruelty and sadism were then selected to serve as SS personnel in one of the hundreds of concentration camps throughout the country. Eventually, a few of them would be chosen to be in charge of the death camps where the Jews were routinely and systematically slaughtered. It is hard to say what is morally more depraved: the routine murder of the death factory without any apparent personal involvement or the sadistic murder that was accompanied by perverted sexual pleasure. My point is that, concretely, these things go together. Routine in destruction and pleasure in destruction are two sides of the same coin.

Sadistic Pleasure of the Nazi Killers

To describe life (if we can call it life) in the death camps – where the mentality of the death instinct reigned, raw and unchecked by sublimation -- is almost beyond what ordinary language can do. I am repeating here a point mentioned at the end of the last chapter. We have neither the images, nor the words or concepts appropriate to a world of raw destruction. The survivor Charlotte Delbo testified that for her Auschwitz permanently destroyed the potency of the sedative we call illusion: "In the camp you could never pretend; you could never take refuge in the imagination," she wrote (Langer, p.4). Pretense is one of our first mental activities. And from earliest childhood, all our mental activities are geared to the context of an ordinary society. This context, however, was utterly absent in the death camps.

Imagine living in a place where perhaps less than one Jewish person in a thousand managed to survive. No wonder that it often took years before survivors could talk of their experiences. Among the survivors were a few artistically gifted writers who told their stories. If you wish to make real to yourself the psychological experience of the death camps I would encourage you to turn to these writers. As I report now some of their stories I want you to note the fatal connection between routine and pleasure in murder.

One of the most excruciating camp routines that had sadism built into it was the twice daily roll call. Charlotte Delbo recalls: "We must stand motionless for hours in the cold and in the wind. We do not speak. The words freeze our lips... and the amazing thing is that we are

still standing. Why? No one thinks 'What is the use' or else does not say it. With our last bit of strength, we stand... if one day I return and want to explain this inexplicable thing, I will say: 'I used to say to myself: you must stand, you must stand for the entire roll call. You must stand again today. It is because you will have stood again today that you will return, if you do return one day.' And this will be false. I did not say anything to myself. I did not think anything. The will to resist no doubt lay in a much deeper and more secret mechanism... I did not think anything. I did not look at anything. I did not feel anything..." (Delbo, p.72). Note the two layers of memory. The memory while Delbo was writing these lines about life at Auschwitz. And the memory she entertained at the camp years earlier ("if you do return one day"). This "future" memory had given her support to "stand for the entire roll call."

One day during roll call an SS doctor through an interpreter asked a seemingly kind question: "He is asking if there are any among us who cannot endure the roll call." Some raised their hands. The question is repeated: "He is asking whether there aren't any others, elderly or sick, who find the roll call too hard in the morning." Other hands went up. The translator-witness quickly added on her own: "But it is better not to say so." Years later she reflects: "Who in fact can endure the roll call? Who can stand motionless for hours? In the middle of the night. In the snow. Without having eaten, without having slept. Who can withstand this cold for hours?" (D., p. 26). What the SS doctor did was a sadistic variation of the dreaded selection process. Here the victims, already killed in spirit, were encouraged to select themselves for the gas chambers.

Another survivor, Primo Levi, recalls the musicians who had to play while the camp inmates were ordered to march in step to go to and from work. He recalls this scene as "the last thing that we shall forget: they are the voice of the camp, the perceptible expression of its geometrical madness, of the resolution of others to annihilate us first as humans in order to kill us more slowly afterwards... There is no longer any will: every beat of the drum becomes a step... They are ten thousand and they are a single grey machine;... they do not think and do not desire, they walk..." (Levi 1959, p.52). Note the author's awareness of being annihilated in his humanness by the systematic ("geometric") routine of Nazi destruction.

What oppressed Primo Levi most was the shame of human degradation (mentioned in the previous chapter), "that shame we knew so well, the shame that drowned us after the selections, and every time we had to watch, or submit to, some outrage; ...[the shame] that the just man experiences at another man's crime; the feeling of guilt that such a crime should exist, that it should have been introduced irrevocably into the world of things that exist..." (Levi 1965, p.12). And along with being ashamed of the humankind as reflected in his murderous oppressors, this witness was also ashamed of what kind of human the system had forced himself to become:

"Many were the ways devised and put into effect by us in order not to die: as many as

there are different human characters. All implied a weakening struggle of one against all, and a by no means small sum of aberration and compromises... to throttle all dignity and kill all conscience, to climb down into the arena as a beast against other beasts, to let oneself be guided by those unsuspected subterranean forces... Survival without renunciation of any part of one's moral world -- apart from powerful and direct interventions of fortune -- was conceded only to very few individuals, made of the stuff of martyrs and saints" (Levi 1959, p.106). This is surely one of the most poignant articulations of the sentiment that pervades this entire work. We cannot neatly divide the world into guilty perpetrators and innocent victims. The gigantic historical evil represented by the Nazi destruction has touched us all and given us serious reason for shame.

In the same spirit, Primo Levi considers a prisoner's adaptation to the routine of camp life -- which alone gave him a slim chance to survive -- a sort of victory for the Nazi desire of destruction. He refers to the innumerable rules that had to be followed in the camp. Any infringement could mean beating, no food, or much worse. If you did not adapt to them you were automatically on the fast train to perdition. If you adapted you had a tiny chance to survive. At the same time, Levi continues, your adapting was a victory for your oppressors: "To destroy a human is difficult, almost as difficult as to create one: it has not been easy, nor quick, but you Germans have succeeded. Here we are, docile under your gaze; from our side you have nothing more to fear; no acts of violence, no words of defiance, not even a look of judgement... Because we also are broken, conquered: even if we know how to adapt ourselves, even if we have finally learned how to find our food and to resist the fatigue and cold, even if we return home" (1959, p.177). What Levi as survivor felt was far from any heroic satisfaction of resistance. It was more like an all encompassing shame that included victims and perpetrators.

Primo Levi, as all survivors, speaks of the excruciating thirst they had to suffer. That was routine. Over and above that, some SS men derived sadistic satisfaction from this fact and showed this by their cruel actions. They would have their dogs make the water of a creek muddy so that people working near there could not drink it. Or they would shove a person who had grabbed an icicle so it would fall to the ground (1959, p.24). Death, of course, was routine in the death camps. And we know that the death factories had been devised to make the killing impersonal and industrially efficient. "All those who finished in the gas chambers have the same story, or more exactly, have no story; they followed the slope down to the bottom, like streams that run down to the sea... One hesitates to call their death death..." (1959, p.101). They were spiritually, as humans, dead before bodily death reached them.

Here again, over and above this systematic industrial killing, you have reports of countless situations where individuals sadistically showed their pleasure in murder. Some such instances were mentioned at the beginning of this chapter. Paul Améry (born in Austria as Paul

Mayer) speaks of Nazism and its death camps as "the existential consummation of destruction," or as "the radical negation of the other" (pp. 28, 35). We have learned that the history of humankind began with the making of a human society and the joy of being part of it. But here, says Améry, we have the rule of the anti-human and the sadistic denial of the social principle. This witness encountered German professional criminals who "in murderous self-realization" (p.36) literally trampled a number of prisoners to death (p. 15).

One final illustration of taking pleasure in pain and death, this time on the part of SS outsiders. The scene, reported by Semprun (1981), is part of the infamous death marches when the Germans were fleeing from the approaching Soviet forces. The few surviving prisoners, half naked, starved and near total exhaustion, were pressed into open cattle cars so tightly that a number were squashed to death or suffocated. A car stopped at a station where outsiders could stare at this dismal picture. It seemed to confirm the Nazi doctrine that Jews were not humans. As if to underline this point some outsiders threw morsels of bread into the wagon. Whereupon an ungodly fight ensued for catching some part of this "gift" during which more people were squashed to death. The outsiders laughed and amused themselves...

Chapters to Come

We started this brief survey or story about the Holocaust (Chapters 2-5) by first discussing in Chapter 1 our human tendency for illusion, pretense, deception and self-deception. All these characteristics are integral components of human psychology and societies. And we have just ended this story by pointing out the equally basic tendency of taking pleasure in power, destruction and even self-destruction. On this basis we can perhaps begin to understand how history and psychology came together to shape the particular story that we call the Jewish Holocaust.

It remains – after the interludes of Part II with four chapters on some of the historical context and Part III with two chapters on some specific psychological context – to discuss in the final Part IV how we can respond meaningfully to this sad story. In Chapter 12 we shall first look at selected situations where people took an active stand against the Nazi ideology of destruction. In Chapter 13 we touch on the most crucial ingredient of our understanding of the Holocaust. We shall ask ourselves what we can do today to take an active stand against the ideology of destruction that in the first place made the Holocaust possible. I will attempt to relate the moral extreme of a past Auschwitz to the existential extreme of a future Hiroshima. This should remind us of the historically most decisive indirect effect of the Nazi evil. Beyond the genocide on one people, the Nazis are responsible for bringing about the development of nuclear weapons and with it the possibility of the murder and death of all of humankind.

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6. On German History and the Nazi Destruction

Overview: In order to somewhat comprehend the atrocities of Nazism it is necessary to recognize what is called, relative to other Western nations, the peculiar path (*Sonderweg*) of German history. This description is particularly true of German history after 1800 and the belated founding of a unified empire in 1871. Without implying that other countries did not share in negative historical tendencies, it is remarkable that the Nazi ideology has clear antecedents in the political culture of that short-lived empire. The very fact that in the first half of the 20th century the catastrophe of two world wars erupted out of Germany suggests that there was something peculiarly destructive and unhealthy in its core social-political fabric, long before the Nazis perpetrated the evil deeds of the Holocaust.

Near the center of the city of Vienna and its mighty dome of Saint Stephen can be found the *Judenplatz* [Jews' Square], the place where for a time in the late Middle Ages Jews were permitted to settle. History reports a first large expulsion and massacre of the Jews there in 1421. Today, the city is about to erect a memorial to a similar but much more recent event, the Nazi massacre of the about 64,000 Viennese Jews who were left behind during the war (out of a total of about 200,000). Excavations revealed the remnants of a medieval synagogue which now will become part of the monument. This memento to a massacre well over 500 years ago is all the more significant in that the Nazi destruction of Jewish life, begun in Germany in 1933, became truly virulent here in Vienna, with Austria's annexation in March 1938.

It so happens that on the same square stands a monument to one of Germany's great classical writers. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing is justly renowned for being perhaps the first European playwright who in 1779 in his play, *Nathan der Weise* (Nathan, the Wise), presented a Jew in a positive, heroic role. So that on this square you have the contrast between the spirit of enlightenment and tolerance and the Nazi racism of destruction, a contrast that could hardly be greater. How was it possible for the German history to produce both the best, as it were, and the worst in Western culture, both a Lessing and a Hitler? Part of the answer is the peculiar brand of German nationalism and German political culture, the specific foci of this chapter.

Germany, the Late-Comer

In striking contrast to other European countries, such as England, France, or Russia, during Lessing's life time in the late 1700s there was not yet anything that could be called a German state. There was no German nationalism for the simple reason that it lacked a country on which it could be based. There was a patchwork of about 300 principalities in the German region of which only two, Austria and Prussia, were among Europe's major powers. Moreover, as I will explain in some detail later on, while the region was of course a prominent

part of a general European culture, there was as yet hardly a specifically German literate culture. The slow shift from a medieval to a more modern mind set occurred in German lands around the time of Lessing, considerably later than in most other Western countries. Perhaps because of its lateness, this mental shift came more suddenly and was experienced more forcefully here. It was also given a specific historical designation: the period of *Aufklärung* (translated into English as *Enlightenment*). [This German term is also used in colloquial speech with reference to knowledge about “the birds and the bees.”]

When in the early 1800s the French revolutionary armies of Napoleon defeated and occupied the entire German region (“The Holy Roman Empire of the German Nations”) German nationalism suddenly came into its own. It was then that for the first time such phrases as the “German fatherland” and the “German river Rhine” were widely heard. A militant nationalism became the major motive force behind the German wars of liberation from French domination. Almost necessarily, love of the fatherland and hate of the French enemy went hand in hand. Thus a reactive, war-like attitude was characteristic of German nationalism at its birth.

Unfortunately, this reactive quality of German nationalism turned out to be erosive of the liberal values of personal freedom and tolerance that characterized the recently emerging spirit of Enlightenment. The war-like patriotism of the Napoleonic years continued and intensified as the idea of a unified country caught the imagination of the German people. For a time, German patriots thought of a kind of republican federation of German states under the presidency of the Austrian emperor (who traditionally had been crowned as Roman emperor until Napoleon in 1806 forced him to change his title to emperor of Austria). But then, after the largely unsuccessful liberal revolutions of 1848, Prussia’s chancellor Bismarck aimed at a unification under that would not be the result of political and revolutionary work on the part of the people and its delegates (who were then working hard for this outcome) but would be an imposition from above. “In Prussia,” Bismarck sneered, “only kings make revolutions.”

When the delegates in 1866 offered Germany’s crown to the king of Prussia, Bismarck refused the offer. Rather, his aim was to realize German unification through political intrigues at the level of princely cabinets and with the help of victorious wars. For this purpose, he literally created the occasions for three short wars, the last one with the France of Napoleon III in 1870. His proclamation of a unified German Empire under Prussian leadership was celebrated in January 1871 in a most offensive manner at Versailles, the palace of the defeated French emperor. This act alone, followed by harsh peace conditions and the loss of Alsace- Lorraine, sufficed to motivate the French people to welcome any future occasion where they could take revenge. That occasion turned out to be the first world war, 1914 - 1918.

After more than forty years of ostensible peace where European powers, Germany more

than anyone else, displayed a blatant militant nationalism in terms of power and threats of wars, World War I is said to have come about almost accidentally. Yet, on a deeper level, everybody knew that the European political state of affairs was not healthy and could not continue for long. In Vienna, the capital city of the faltering multi-ethnic Hapsburg monarchy, the outgoing years of the 19th century were felt literally as “the end of a period” (*fin-de-siècle*). In fact, the war was a natural conclusion of years of irresponsible cold war and brinkmanship in which Germany in a boisterous and irresponsible style acted out its role as a world power. In this attitude it managed to see threatening enemies in all the great powers that were its neighbors: France in the West, smarting from the recent defeat and loss of territory, the expanding Russia in the East, and Britain whose world hegemony Germany resented deeply. After Germany’s defeat and political collapse in 1918 and the subsequent punitive peace conditions imprudently imposed by the victorious allies, Hitler in World War II, as we have learned in Chapters 2 and 3, made one more attempt to combine aggression and war with an ideology of nationalism that was destructive and sick to its core.

German Nationalism

Continuing now our earlier discussions of the “social image” of a society, let us examine what the term German nationalism implied, long before the Nazis used it for their destructive purposes. Because of its reactive emergence, it claimed supposedly innate characteristics that made the German “race” worthy and superior to others. This comparative nationalism was based on mythical and romantic ideals, not on high standards of cultural and political achievements. Thus from its beginning in the early 1800s, German nationalism moved in an illusory and destructive direction quite different from the nationalism of other great European nations. There, British “snobbishness” or French “chauvinism” may be associated with their respective nationalism, but in spite of colonial and other excesses, societal-cultural values and achievements were the ground of these national attitudes, not just “blood and soil.” Moreover, these values had an universal humanistic appeal. They did not have to be imposed on others by force; often, they were eagerly embraced by others.

I have already referred to the characteristic of belatedness of German nationalism. For whatever historical reasons, in terms of political culture the German regions (with the exception of the German Swiss cantons) were always behind their Western neighbors. They were less “mature,” less “autonomous,” more like children, in the matter of social-political responsibility and accountability. Two examples should suffice to illustrate this assertion, one dealing with the cultural topic of the late blooming of German literature, the other with the political topic of the relation between the government and the governed. From a psychological viewpoint, this immaturity is ominous for the reactions it triggers and its possible destructive consequences.

How can we explain that an Italian Dante, an English Shakespeare, a Spanish Cervantes,

a French Molière had no counterpart in German classical literature until several centuries later? One reason could be the desperate social and economic state of large parts of the German regions in the course of thirty years of warfare, 1618 - 1648. In these long years, religion was used as an ideological pretext to bolster the political powers of domestic and foreign reigning dynasties, with scant regard for the welfare of the common people.

More specifically on the linguistic level, it can be argued that the German language is underdeveloped (see Chapter 12). Along this line, there was also what can only be called an indigenous German inferiority complex. For instance, as late as the middle of the 18th century, Frederick of Prussia, like most German princes at that time, had only French spoken at his court; the German language, he remarked, was fit only for peasants, not for cultured people. Similarly, the German philosopher Leibniz wrote his major works in French. Now, the belated German nationalism that arose at the beginning of the 19th century was partly a reaction to this perceived inferiority of the German language. We know that this is not a healthy psychological response, that envy and the comparative attitude of trying to be as good as and better than another carry with it the danger of producing unforeseen and undesirable results. Nazism clearly was an outgrowth of much that went wrong in German history and one aspect of this malaise had to do with perception of the German language itself.

Of course, it would be absurd to present Nazism as a direct and necessary outcome of the German language; but it would be equally amiss to fail pointing out the evident relation. Clearly, Nazism cannot be thought of as apart from its historical place of origin or its German language. The rhetoric in which Nazi ideology and propaganda was expressed is so much tied to the German language that translations of these into English or other languages are not readily meaningful. Not only are there no simple English equivalents for such words as *Führer* (leader), *Blitzkrieg* (lightning war), *Einsatztruppen* (reserve troops), *Kriegsrohstoffabteilung* (division of war-essential raw products); the translations of Nazi political speeches into English take on an artificial, if not comical character. No wonder Allied soldiers in World War II referred to the English purveyor of Nazi propaganda as Lord Haw-haw.

A second, more substantive example of German backwardness touches on the relation of the common people to its governing class. I referred to it as political immaturity. Again as I suggested earlier, this is in striking contrast to the English or French people who initiated and followed through political revolutions that did away with the divine right of kings together with a divinely ordained and unquestioned subjection of the common people under the governing classes. Even as late as 1848, the German people failed to gain a decent measure of political freedom. Was this due to a lack of serious involvement of its educated class in political and social questions or was this lack itself the expression of a more general social apathy? Whatever the precise reasons, the Germany of the 1920s in which Nazism developed was a

land with no history of a successful middle class revolution, a land with a general political backwardness and a passive, God-like respect for authority, frequently rationalized as virtue and piety.

The Bismarck Empire

I pointed out earlier that the founding of a unified state of Germany in 1871 finally came about through imposition from and on the princes, managed by political intrigues and fabricated wars on the part of the Prussian chancellor Bismarck. After this kind of unhealthy beginning, the political culture of the Bismarck era paved the way, in the words of the German historian Wehler (1985, p.61) “for the emergence of an anti-liberal, authoritarian state.” Wehler documents Bismarck’s “continued obstruction to the development of civic responsibility,” along with “the glorification of excuses in German politics.” Wehler concludes that “... no matter how long and tortuous the road from Bismarck to Hitler, Bismarck seemed the one responsible for the course.” Specifically, Bismarck drafted a constitution that preserved the aristocratic-monarchical order while effectively preventing the resultant state from moving toward democracy. Union was achieved, says the historian Craig (1987, p. 39) “at the price of ambiguities and contradictions that were always awkward and, as the years passed, invested German parliamentary life, and politics in general, with an increasing amount of friction and frustration.”

Another historian, Weart (1998, p. 143), focusing on Germany’s political culture as it continued after Bismarck, writes: “If Germany had republican tendencies, Kaiser Wilhelm II opposed them to the utmost of his powers... by upbringing and temperament he was fanatically devoted to the principles of autocracy. .. The problem was not just his personality but the system that surrounded him. Wilhelm came into contact with hardly anyone but like-minded aristocrats who flattered him endlessly, mostly military officers steeped in principles of warrior obedience and the furious defense of honor. None of these men saw Germany’s elected politicians as partners in negotiation, but as enemies to outmaneuver or destroy... using much the same language whether speaking of unruly German working-class leaders or entire foreign nations.” Significantly, Bismarck routinely called opponents of the regime, whether Catholics, liberals or socialists, “*Reichsfeinde*,” enemies of the empire.

Historians agree that the military establishment of the German *Reich* was a veritable state within a state, or more accurately, the estate that permeated the entire political culture and every class in the society. It is hard to convey to what an extent military tradition was respected and imitated as an ideal even by persons of the lowest social rank. Members of the government routinely wore military uniform, displaying their rank and title. The corps of officers was almost identical with (and practically restricted to) the bulk of the German, mostly Prussian, nobility. Ordinary people had to serve in the military forces for three years. Importantly,

Bismarck had managed to isolate the military department from any real accountability to democratic processes.

When parliament refused to allocate the requested military funds the government simply bypassed this institution, justifying its position in the name of the Prussian king as the supreme war-lord.. This bypassing of democratic accountability had started with Bismarck in the Prussian legislature; it continued throughout the empire period and contributed decisively to the outbreak of World War I. Liberal or socialist opposition apparently was not strong enough in Germany's immature political culture to outlaw this authoritarian-military strategy. Weart (p. 192) describes the politically passive attitude of the common people : "Most ordinary Germans acquiesced, for deliberate campaigns of school instruction and propaganda had driven the worship of military force deep into every layer of society."

In fact, many Germans considered military-like order and submission to authority as singularly conducive to their romantic social image of a conflict-free society. This illusory image was propagated in literary and political discourse as a desirable state toward which a true community would tend. It goes along with the fact, mentioned above, that political dissent could be looked upon with suspicion as showing disloyalty if not treachery vis-a-vis the fatherland. Whereas in Britain Her Majesty's loyal opposition was officially recognized and instituted, the leading section of Bismarck's Germany never accepted political parties of real opposition, whether liberal or socialist. Opposing parties were treated as political outsiders, as potential enemies of the community, even when they attracted, as they did toward the end of the period, close to half the number of voters.

Even so, it is instructive to realize that the opposition was never able to dislodge a given government. Shortly before the onset of World War I, when the government had lost the parliament's confidence, the chancellor -- as Bismarck before in the matter of military procurement -- simply bypassed the legislature and ruled by decree, while claiming the emperor's privilege of appointment (Weart, p. 144). Again, the common people who voted for the opposition in large enough numbers, yet were not powerful -- or perhaps did not have the requisite civil courage -- to the extent that they could radically break the feudal-authoritarian frame that prevailed in their political culture.

It stands to reason that with the implicit image and the unrealistic ideal of a conflict-free society the possibility of nurturing democratic attitudes in Germany was severely limited. The military values of German nationalism easily prevailed over liberal and democratic values. Thus during the imperial period, desirable political changes could not be worked out with the participation of the broad masses of the people, changes that would take account of the rapidly changing cultural and industrial situation in the country. In the fields of education, administration, industry, culture and art, the new unified Germany was indeed preeminent, even

as in terms of military power it was second only to Britain. But with a low tolerance for political opposition, the democratic apparatus in the form of political parties and the German parliament could not and did not function -- as it did in other Western countries -- as the institution enabling meaningful dialogue of differing civic opinions and interests.

World War I

With the hindsight of the catastrophes of the two world wars, both originating in Germany, we can be sure that there were unhealthy, negative tendencies in the social fabric of the German empire, long before these final destructive disruptions. Recognizing that the Holocaust (as the most deadly form of Nazism) is incomprehensible without the destruction of World War II, even as World War II is incomprehensible without the previous war, we should then search for an answer to the question how World War I was possible -- even as we ask how the Holocaust was possible. For in 1914 there were no real, specific aims for the political leaders of Germany to engage in what they called a preventive war. Rather, there were long standing and severe negative historical tendencies in the body politic that contributed decisively to an external policy of accepting and even welcoming the high risks of a war. Supported by historians such as Wehler and Craig, my contention is that the social forces in Germany that in 1914 led to war were the same unhealthy forces that less than twenty years later led to Hitler's dictatorship.

Historians suggest that if we look for "causes" of World War I we must above all consider Germany's internal policies that paved the way for initiating a war. They describe them as desperate attempts to resolve continual internal crises by means of high risk foreign adventures, to use external conflict as a means of distracting people from internal problems. I pointed out above that democratic mechanisms for resolving internal social unrest were not in place. In other words, the country lacked the political culture and effective procedures that would encourage the free expression of conflicts and opposing interests and allow their peacefully negotiated resolutions. Over the long run this stressful situation became after 1890 a permanent state of crisis that finally resulted in a serious polarization and quasi-paralysis of social-political forces. Wehler (p.99) refers here to "a crisis in a deeply divided nation, to which there appeared to be no solution." And he concludes that "this was without doubt one of the main factors which led to the policy of high-risk diplomacy in the summer of 1914." This policy of taking unreasonable foreign risks in lieu of working out reasonable compromises at home is known as "*die Flucht nach vorn*" (escape forwards).

Typical of Bismarck's political culture was his technique of "negative integration." That refers to his habit of rallying political forces by using the primitive social-psychological opposition between "in-group" and "out-group," stylized as "friends" and "foes" of the empire. In this way, "German domestic politics, along with broad sections of public opinion, became

accustomed to the notion that a deep division existed among the citizen of the state. The 'empire's enemies' were discriminated against as second-class citizens by means of formal mechanisms... As people became accustomed to this development the level of tolerance toward such illiberal tendencies before they appeared offensive was gradually increased. That one had some neighbors who were inferior became part and parcel of everyday life during the fifty years of the German Empire's existence and helped foster a mentality which polarized citizens on a 'friend' and 'foe' basis" (Wehler, p. 94). Here also was the source of Germany's fear of encirclement, the standard excuse for having initiated two world wars.

Throughout the rest of his work, Wehler points out the relevance of this unsettled internal state for the outbreak of World War I and the collapse of the empire after Germany's defeat. Beyond that, Wehler thinks, "this helps explain why the psychological barriers against the physical liquidation of minorities could be broken down so quickly in, of all people, the nation of 'poets and thinkers'. Viewed from an historical perspective, it is possible to trace a line from the 'enemies of the Empire' both to the attacks on Jewish synagogues in 1938 (*Reichskristallnacht*) as well as to the Nazi ideal of a 'folk community' (*Volksgemeinschaft*) with its necessary corollary of 'parasites on the nation' which had to be exterminated" (Wehler, p.94).

The critical events of 1914 were closely linked to this kind of unhealthy nationalism which was hypersensitive to possible internal and external enemies. Why else would Germany be willing to give Austria a free hand in going to war against Serbia for its alleged support of Slavic revolt within the faltering Hapsburg monarchy? This set the ball rolling: The Russian czar mobilized the troops to come to the support of his Slavic ally. Germany then mobilized not only against a possible Russian threat but at the same time against France (which was allied with Russia). When the German attack against France took the form of German forces invading neutral Belgium, Britain felt that the German moves across the English channel was a threat to its naval superiority and declared war.

Here is Weart's explanation why in this instance the barriers to violent war had broken down: "German, Austrian, and Russian authorities saw all rivals as malicious enemies who must be dominated or outwitted, and they meant not only other nations but also dissenters at home. The Kaiser's entourage spoke fervently of smashing the Socialist opposition; the Austrian court followed suit while still more vigorously attacking nationalist separatists; the Russian court, with a violent quasi-revolution less than a decade behind it, was most nervous of all. While none wanted a great war, each needed the prestige that would come from making foreign enemies back down. A crisis offered each autocracy an opportunity to divert the hostility of its subjects onto a foreign scapegoat, smothering criticism under a blanket of patriotic solidarity" (Weart, p. 194).

Note the ominous psychological connection between internal social and political difficulties and, rather than leaders working patiently at solving them, deceitfully diverting attention to internal or external enemies. But then, for thousand of years, the making of wars was considered “normal” policy, “by other means.” Thus, Bismarck’s diplomacy has been praised for deceitfully creating the impression as if Napoleon III had personally insulted the king of Prussia and thereby unleashing the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 -- which then led to the founding of a unified German empire. Nevertheless, World War I was probably the last time in Western history that great powers could go to war with each other in the naive expectation that the violence of war could have a constructive outcome. Not even a Hitler could motivate his men to imitate the enthusiasm of the German soldiers, going to war in 1914 and shouting: “*Siegreich wolln wir Frankreich schlagen!*” (“Victorious shall we beat France!”).

German Antisemitism

The German political culture, by insinuating that political dissenters were strangers and enemies of the community, provided fertile ground for the poison of antisemitism. Referring to the mid-1870s, Wehler considers it “misleading to conclude that as an organized political force antisemitism was after all only an insignificant fringe phenomenon. In fact, in the long term it gained a disproportionately large influence through the German Conservative Party which made antisemitism respectable” (p. 79). Moreover, “alongside traditional forms of antisemitism of the religious, cultural and economic varieties, biological forms of organized antisemitism now appeared” (p.109). A *numerus clausus* (a limited number) for admission of Jewish students was practiced throughout universities. The composer Gustav Mahler could not have been appointed musical director of the Vienna opera if he had not been baptized. Not surprisingly, “between 1878 and 1910 there was not a single Jewish officer in the entire Prussian army... Whether held overtly or covertly, antisemitism was a dominant feature of the imperial officer corps, and in this area Nazism had no need to introduce into the army of its own day what was already a well-established practice” (p.160). These and an untold number of other anti-Jewish discriminatory practices were not legal statutes but mostly unwritten social customs.

With all this, we must never forget the chasm that separates discriminatory practices, even including expulsion, from physical extermination. To contemporaries, German practices against Jews before Hitler would not have seemed that different from what happened elsewhere. In fact, the most notorious case of antisemitism occurred in France 1894, when a Jewish captain Dreyfus was falsely condemned for high treason and incarcerated for twelve years. Even after his innocence had been clearly recognized, the French establishment appealed to the need to save the honor of the military and attempted to let Dreyfus be the scapegoat for its own corruption. But what France did have and what was sadly lacking in Germany were writers of civil courage, such as a Zola (who exploded the Dreyfus affair), a Victor Hugo (who opposed

Napoleon III), a Balzac, a Voltaire, or a Rousseau.

It is in vain that one looks for a similar tradition in German lands. German writers with new or revolutionary ideas, such as Marx or Heine, who critically exposed unhealthy historical developments within their country were not welcome. Germany was content to be a land of customs and of laws imposed from above, even though glaring social injustices frequently prevailed. In the German social image, the rule of equality before the law derived, not from the people, but from the authority of the state (*Obrigkeitsstaat*) with its first principle of *Ordnung muss sein* (there must be order). Again, it is only in hindsight that we can see how a relatively innocuous antisemitism -- after all, close to a million Jews tolerated it in pre-Hitler Germany -- can be the antecedent to the murderous killing of Jews on the part of Hitler's Nazis.

World War I was not the first war fought by the German imperial army. Between 1904 and 1907, the indigenous Herero population of what was then called German South-West Africa (today's Namibia) revolted against the colonizing Germans. The German army responded with an early form of 'total war' where the "objective was no longer victory, but 'annihilation' (*Vernichtung*), as it was referred to in revealing language. The military waged a campaign which left no possibility for peace. Almost half the natives were wiped out. Many were killed by being deliberately driven into the waterless Omaheke Desert. A quarter of their number were deported and abandoned in a deliberate policy of extermination in the prison camps... the troops set about creating 'peace and order'... it was the peace of the graveyard. Hatred and fear reigned between blacks and whites" (Wehler, p. 155).

At that time some protest against this policy of extermination was raised in the German parliament; but as we have learned, the German parliament had no effective voice in military matters. Extermination of an enemy in war time was thus seen to be possible and justified as a military necessity. This military precedent, along with the racial notion of terminating humanly unworthy life, played its ominous role in the racial antisemitism of Nazism that became widely acceptable within a generation after this genocidal slaughter in German South-West Africa.

History and Morals

In concluding this historical overview of German political culture before World War I we need to reflect again that some of the unhealthy political features mentioned in connection with the Germany of 1871 were of course also found in other European countries. Nevertheless, the German historical situation over many generations permitted negative features to prevail such that the recent Nazi atrocities may indeed seem to be organically connected to Germany's recent and not so recent past. This connection necessarily takes away much of the uniqueness of the evils of Nazism and also spreads the forces that contributed to the rise of murderous Nazism into a wider historical and geographical context. In the next chapter, we shall continue to flesh out

this context by focusing on government-sponsored mass murder in this, the 20th century.

In particular, for all the evil that the two world wars and the Holocaust imply, we are dealing here with forces for which in the past people, individually or collectively, have not been held responsible. However, historical constellations that were previously thought to have nothing to do with morality turned out to be highly evil and destructive. And thus, for the first time in history and largely due to the public awareness of the Holocaust, we are now beginning to ask and indeed cry out for a moral responsibility in historical actions and an assignment of accountability and guilt. This process started after World War I when France insisted in having the defeated Germany explicitly acknowledge its guilt in having caused the war. The clause was controversial even among the Allies and bitterly resented by the Germans – precisely because never before had war been an object of moral censure and also because the nature of the crime (for which you are supposed to be guilty) and its historical causation were ambiguous. This “war guilt” clause became a political hot issue in the 1920s and substantially contributed to the rise of Nazism. Finally, as if in self-fulfilling prophecy, this Nazism succeeded in bringing out all the really negative features for which Germans had previously been blamed. And in this case, moral guilt for the atrocities of the Holocaust seemed obvious and hardly controversial.

It is not easy to combine moral and historical perspectives. Yet the Holocaust has taught us that for the sake of saving humankind, we must take a moral perspective. At a certain point, historical actions take on a moral dimension. Clearly, it is not easy to recognize this point in the flow of history – at what point did Germany go awry? -- even though failure to do so today can have consequences far beyond the extermination of one single people.

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Appendix to Ch. 6: A Note on the German Language and Nazi Destruction

Overview: I point out that the German language has no appropriate word for the English word, *people*, as used, for instance, in the preamble to the Constitution: "We, the people." This instance, as well as the status of so-called "foreign words" in the German language, reveal some deep-seated attitudes related to the Nazi destruction.

Without in any way supporting or proposing a theory linking thinking/culture and language, I would like to comment on two remarkable instances of how the kind of words available to a language both shape and reveal deep-seated attitudes on the part of the habitual language users. In particular, I refer on the one hand, to the German equivalent or translation of the English word *people*, and on the other to the difference in the status of foreign words in the two languages.

We the People

We, the people of the United States, is the beginning phrase of the preamble to the Constitution. Translated into German, it reads: *Wir, das Volk der Vereinigten Staaten.* However, this translation is today, after the Nazi time, no longer appropriate. Why not? Grammatically, both *people* and *Volk* are singular nouns and have their own plurals. Yet the singular word *people* is itself the customary plural of *person*. As a consequence there are profound differences in meaning between *people* and *Volk*: Where the word *people* is naturally associated with individual personhood, the association of *Volk* is in the opposite direction of a supra-personal entity such as race, *Muttersprache* (mother-tongue) or *Vaterland* (father-land).

For example, when Emperor Franz Joseph proclaimed a state of war in August 1914 he addressed his country with "*An meine Völker*" ("To my peoples"). That is, he articulated the division of the state into a number of discrete unities, ostensibly in terms of language, each of which was one *Volk* among many *Völker* living in the one Austrian-Hungarian state, such as Germans, Hungarians, Czechs, Slovaks, Croats, Slovens, Bosnians, Romanians, Poles, Italians.

The English word, *folk*, derives of course from the Germanic word, *Volk*, and in middle English was used similarly. But significantly, where as a noun it referred to a plurality of individuals, modern English gave way to the word *people*. The meaning of *folk* was relegated to the notion of "common" or "ordinary." The nobility or the corps of officers would be contrasted to the lower social status of "the folk" and so would the so-called intelligentsia of "learned" or "sophisticated" people. In this cultural sense, it is today fashionable to refer to "folk psychology," in contrast to "scientific psychology."

There is, of course, another German word available to translate the English word, *people*, namely, *Leute*. For instance, "Many people are on the beach," can only be translated as "Viele Leute sind am Strand." We may wonder why German usage does not permit translating "We,

the people of the United States," with "Wir, die Leute der Vereinigten Staaten." Actually, there is nothing wrong with the language of this phrase. It would be a perfectly grammatical and accurate rendering of the opening phrase in the American Constitution. However, in this context common German usage requires the word *Volk*. Why is this so?

As I indicated above, the connotation of the German word *Volk* connects people and country. In fact, it was during the belated and precipitous rise of German nationalism in the Napoleonic wars of liberation (see Chapter 6) that the word *Volk* acquired its present nationalistic connotation. Also at that time, *Freiheit*, the German word for the key aspiration of the American and French revolutions, *freedom, liberté*, acquired its nationalistic meaning of freedom of the *Volk* from foreign domination, whereas in America and France it meant freedom of the individual *person* from a suppressive government. It is on account of this nationalistic association that the English word *people* in the phrase "We the people of the United States," has to be translated as *Volk* and not as *Leute*. This connotation is totally absent from the English word *people*. Nevertheless, it is this nationalistic association, ideologically exploited by the Nazis, that today makes this word inappropriate.

We turn now to the even more crucial political connotation. After all, the phrase, "We, the people" implicitly carries basic notions of democracy, personal freedom, and a government's power deriving from the consent of the free individuals. Not only are there no similar implications in the German phrase, *Wir, das Volk*, but they are diametrically opposed. If you spell these out you would assert that the worth of us as individuals derives from that entity, *das Volk*. Consequently a sentence, such as, "the government's power derives from the people" has opposite meanings, depending on the language. In English, the free individual, collectively referred to as "we, the people" is the last instance. In German, it is "Wir, das Volk," a mythical entity that empowers both the government and the individual.

There is a famous distinction in the sociological literature of the German past that Americans find hard to articulate or even to conceive. The German words *Gemeinschaft* and *Gesellschaft* are usually translated as *community* and *society* respectively. The term *community* implies an organic tie, a natural grouping of people within age-old traditions and customs. In contrast, you have the more external ties of an *association* or *society*, regulated by reasonable conventions and laws. There is here a subtle insinuation of an anti-democratic value judgement and the illusory ideal of a conflict-free society which sets *Gemeinschaft* over *Gesellschaft*. Remember from above how Bismarck referred to opposing political parties as "*Reichsfeinde*," (enemies of the state), whereas the English tradition assumed the prevalence, indeed the necessity of opposing opinions in the normal political process ("Her Majesty's loyal opposition").

As Germany now at long last -- over two hundred years after England and America --

takes to democracy and liberal attitudes it will be interesting to see whether the word, *das Volk*, gives way to some less loaded and misleading word, such as, *die Leute*. Something like this apparently happened in the English language around the time before the modern age started. Still, as of today, it remains a curious linguistic fact that the Nazi slogan, “*Ein Volk, ein Reich, ein Führer*”, can be comfortably said in German but not in English, even as the American, “*We, the people*” can be said in English but not in German.

Foreign Words

Now I turn to a second observation, namely, the German notion of *Fremdwörter*. These are not "foreign words" in the sense that "le beefsteak" is an English word used in the French language, or "verboten" (forbidden) is a German word an English speaker may use to direct attention to the German stereotype of strict order. Rather, they are words that have been part of the German language for a long time, common words such as *Orange*, *genieren* (to inconvenience), *Soziätet* (society), *Sex*, *Kommandant* (commander), etc. When I attended an Austrian *Gymnasium* in the 1930s, these words were found in a separate German dictionary of foreign words ("Deutsches Fremdwörterbuch") to distinguish them from “genuine” German words. Needless to say that the Nazi authorities attempted to cleanse the German language of foreign words, even as they insisted on the specific German script.

Compare this to the ease with which foreign words become part of the English/ American language, such as the recently assimilated *blitzkrieg* and *flak*, along a list of other German words, including *angst*, *wanderlust*, *pretzel*, or *kindergarten*. By contrast, foreign words that are and have been used in the German language for hundreds of years are still not the genuine article. More important than the assimilation of words is of course the assimilation of people. Today, Turks that have lived in Germany for three generations are still not Germans. We may wonder what will perhaps change first, admission of foreign words into the language or admission of foreign immigrants to the *Volk* (after that term has changed its meaning).

THE END

7. A Century of Destruction

Overview: As a context for comprehending the Holocaust, this note gives a list of recent government sponsored killings, apart from war-related deaths. In addition to six million Jews, the Nazis killed about 15½ million civilians. The total number of victims in genocides and civilian mass killings this century is over 171 million. The attempt to criminalize and stop genocides leads to the moral issue of wars in general: on this point, “democratic” peace provides a basis for hope.

We honor the Jewish Holocaust by recognizing that its victims were among the about twenty-one million civilians murdered by the Nazi genocide state (Rummel, 1997). Remember also that the number of close to six million Jewish victims is made up of about 250,000 Jews from Germany, Austria, Western Europe and Italy (the majority of whom were assimilated to Western culture); whereas the rest comprise almost the totality of the traditional orthodox Jewish societies that for centuries had flourished in Eastern Europe. In addition, the Nazi regime killed about 258,000 Roma and Sinti (Gypsies); 172,500 Germans with mental or bodily defects; 220,000 homosexual Germans; and 290,000 Germans suspected of political resistance plus about 14 ½ million more non-German civilians in Nazi-occupied Europe: a total of about 21 million civilians killed by the Nazis. Then there are the about 28,736,000 European casualties of the world war unleashed by the Nazis. We thus have the staggering number of nearly 50 million people killed between 1933 and 1945 for which the Nazis are directly responsible.

Clearly, the Jewish Holocaust in itself can in no objective sense be counted as a war-related operation. What conceivable military threat did the Jews pose for the security of the German state? What conceivable military advantage was gained by killing the Jews? Yet you realize that even Hitler could not have succeeded in killing the totality of Jews under his power unless he involved his country in a war of total destruction. And in fact, the slaughter of the Jews started some eight years after he had come to power and had unleashed a war of destruction that was primarily directed against the Slavic East. In fact, the number of Eastern Slavs (Poles, Russians, Ukrainians, Belarus, etc.) killed by Nazi Germany is estimated as over 10½ million. Only this destructive war combined with a deranged mind fed by Nazi ideology can explain why even a tiny Jewish baby could be considered a potential enemy that had to be captured and eliminated.

Murder by Government

To get some geographical and historical perspectives on this horror of Nazi killing, we leave out clear situations of war-related killing and focus on civilian mass murder by government

during this, the bloodiest century in history so far. The grisly list of megamurders (Rummel, 1994) includes the Soviet Union of Lenin and Stalin with 61.9 million murders; preceded by the pre-war Russia with 1.1 millions; Mao's China with 35.2 million murders, preceded by Mao's and Chiang Kai-shek's civil war years with 3.5 and 10.1 million murders respectively. Further there is Japan's military regime with 5.9 million murders; Cambodia's Pol-Pot period, with 2 millions; Turkey's elimination, 1909-18, of about 1.8 million Armenians; the communist regimes of Vietnam and of North Korea with 1.7 million murders each; the post-World War II murder of expelled Germans in Poland (1.6 millions), Czechoslovakia (197,000), and Yugoslavia (82,000). Then there is Pakistan's murder in Bangladesh of about 1½ million; Mexico's, 1900-20, of about 1.4 million; and Tito's of about 1.1 million, preceded by Yugoslavia's war years, with Croatia killing about 800,000 Serbs and Serbia about 300,000 Croats. Add a total of about 17.5 millions lesser government murders plus the more recent mass killings of about 800,000 Tutsis by Rwanda Hutus and the Serbian killings of about 200,000 Muslims in Bosnia and ten thousand in Kosova and East Timor. Thus, in our century alone, a staggering number of about 172 million civilians have been killed in mass murders that were instituted by their own governments.

Apart from the above-listed regimes that have perpetrated civilian murders on a massive scale, there have of course been and there still are a great number of autocratic regimes that routinely practice isolated acts of civilian murder by government. This is done in the pursuit of terrorizing the citizenry into submission or quelling the rise of an active opposition. The bad news is that history proves this violent procedure to be working quite well and fulfilling its terrorizing function. The good news is that recent history also shows a few countries succeeding with a peaceful transition to a democracy from a previous autocratic tradition that did not shy away from violence and political murder. Such was the case in Argentina, Chile, and especially in South Africa. I stress here the notion of a peaceful transition. For since the time of the French revolution, 1789-99, history has taught us that a *violent* overthrow of a local government is not likely to lead to a *peaceful* regime.

Along this line, there is also the dramatic change in political culture that was originally imposed in 1945 on a defeated Germany and Japan. This unique historical example of a rehabilitative peace contrasts strikingly with the harsh peace accords after World War I. It provides, as it were, an optimistic outcome to a sad European history of misuse of power, unrest and violence that had its climax in World War II and the Holocaust.

Lessons to be Learned

I believe we can learn two basic lessons from this brief survey of genocides and civilian mass murders in our time. First, these atrocious acts of killing on a massive scale must be seen as a normal part of our violent and war-filled human history. Second, there does not seem to

be a viable international procedure by which to stop genocide short of being effectively prepared and using military power against the aggressor.

The first recognition in no way takes away the uniqueness of each particular genocide; even as stressing what was specific and unique to the Jewish Holocaust is not and should not be meant to place other genocides on a lesser scale of moral depravity. There was uniqueness, I believe, in the Jewish genocide that becomes apparent when we contrast it, say, with the 1994 genocidal slaughter in Rwanda. In the Jewish case we note two special features: the absence of any traditional basis for considering Jews as enemies and the rationalized bureaucratic method with relatively few killing “professionals.” In contrast, in Rwanda there was first, a history of potential and actual enmity between the Hutus and the Tutsis, an enmity that was used for their own purposes by the preceding colonial powers (Germany, Belgium); and then there was the government-ordered frenzy of the ordinary Hutu population slaughtering Tutsi neighbors with machetes and guns. It is estimated that about 800,000 Tutsis were thus murdered within less than three months, an incredible rate of ten thousand a day, comparable to the maximum killing rate of Auschwitz. Now think of a German surviving the war whose job had been to transport deadly gas to Auschwitz and a Hutu today who a few years ago participated (refusal would have meant death) in the mass killings. Is it fruitful to compare and rank the respective moral configurations in these two persons? And what criteria should we use? The evil of genocide is not a unitary dimension that can be measured and compared like the degree of hot or cold.

The second, more practical, lesson is to take a look at the mass murders perpetrated on civilians in our time, that is, many years after the crime of the Jewish Holocaust -- which we like to believe should have taught us the obligation to avoid similar moral horrors. After all, we have Holocaust memorials, we feel good about the UN Genocide Convention, ratified finally also by the USA in 1987, and we spontaneously join in the cry of “Never again!” Now ask yourself in a serious manner whether we should or could have done anything to stop some of the more recent genocidal murders. This consideration is particularly urgent now that much of the world is no longer divided into two opposing political camps. In the past, the stress of the Cold War by itself interfered with a calm and constructive historical assessment of a given political situation. This could conceivably explain why a concerted international effort to stop genocide, say in Pol Pot’s Cambodia 1972, was not feasible. This particularly atrocious genocide took the lives of one about a third of the six million Cambodians; it was only stopped in 1975 when Vietnam, by that time victorious over South Vietnam and USA, invaded its neighbor and put an end to Pol Pot’s murderous regime.

However, now we have the recent genocides in the former Yugoslavia (1991-95) and in the above mentioned Rwanda (1994). They should be particularly troubling. For in both

cases international observers were at hand who were in a position to predict the likelihood of an imminent mass slaughter. News media and television gave us concrete pictures of the day by day happenings of horror. In 1991 we saw in our homes Serb concentration camps with Muslim men kept in unspeakably inhumane conditions, with sexual sadism, arbitrary tortures and mass executions. Seeing these scenes, we could not help but compare them to the horrors of the Nazi concentration camps. Similar scenes were already shown the previous year when the Serbs went about “ethnic cleansing” (a euphemism for genocide) of Croats and Croats answered in kind. The news from Rwanda was not so intensive; after all, the place is in far away Africa. But there, too, video testimony of the slaughter was available and the news reports were unambiguous. The important thing to note is that in both cases the international community intentionally turned away from taking a responsible stance and from calling what they saw (and could predict) by its proper name. Such a declaration could have activated the solemn pledge of the UN Genocide Convention to resist the wholesale destruction of peoples.

Eventually, Western powers did intervene and stop the Muslim massacre (the “Dayton Agreement” between Serbia, Croatia and Bosnia), while the intervention of a Tutsi-dominated party put an end to the genocidal Hutu power. The question arises: Could an earlier intervention have avoided the genocides altogether? In the case of Rwanda, it was known that mass killings were being prepared. A small military police force together with diplomatic and economic international pressure could probably have sufficed to avoid not only the genocide itself but also the massive dislocation of millions of people in the aftermath of this horror. But there was no will to intervene. The UN did not take the genocidal warnings seriously and preferred to see the situation as a “normal” civil war. The few Belgian and French UN peace keepers who were on the scene gave in to the threat of the aggressive Hutu power and withdrew – at times, in the full knowledge that the Tutsis who had fled to be in their protection would be murdered shortly after their departure (Gourevitch, 1998).

The genocidal killings that followed the breakup of Yugoslavia, first 1991 in Croatia, then 1992-1995 in Bosnia, and finally 1998 -1999 in Kosova, were closer to home. The United Nations, the NATO military alliance, and the European powers along with the United States attempted to stop the killing and were in fact continually in diplomatic touch with the leaders in this conflict. But this international intervention was unable to effectively stem the genocidal aggression of the Serbs. The Serbs on their part -- as war makers in the past -- denied any aggressive intent and kept insisting they were merely defending Serbian security against Croat or Muslim aggression.

The bad faith of the Serb negotiators, their lying, and the way they frustrated the efforts toward a negotiated peace was a sorry spectacle indeed. The continuous genocidal killings, the continuous lying of the aggressors, and the continuous futile attempts at an

international intervention to stop the genocide, were widely displayed on television screens for all to see and to ponder. At the latest by the end of 1992, US officials along with the rest of the world powers could take note of the genocide perpetrated in front of their eyes. However, they apparently made a conscious choice not to see the killing for what it was. Instead, they preferred to equalize the blame by using the language of a civil war between groups that “sort of naturally” hated each other.

By 1995 the Serb forces had aggressively occupied and “ethnically cleansed” about half the area of Bosnia. In the meantime, the capital city of Sarajevo had been encircled by heavy artillery for over two years and the residents struggled to survive the daily military onslaught. About 200,000 Muslim civilians had been killed and more than two million Muslims were driven into exile. The pre-war multi-cultural, multi-ethnic, multi-religious Bosnia no longer existed. The last atrocity that finally motivated the international community to act was perpetrated in Srebrenica. This town was officially designated a “safe area” for Muslims and consequently had a greatly enlarged population of about 40,000. Less than 300 UN personnel were stationed there to monitor compliance with the safe area conditions. Nevertheless, in cynical violation, the Serb forces in July attacked the town and even took UN persons hostage. When the town was fully in their hands they first collected all male Muslims and then expelled the old people, women and children to cross over into Muslim territory. The Serb general, elated over the victory, smilingly gave his word to the women -- and the television audience -- that the men would be treated well. Within a few days, however, it became clear what treatment they received. According to the Red Cross, 7,079 Srebrenica Muslims were missing (Cohen 1998, p. 426). It was systematic, point blank murder, the biggest massacre of the Bosnian war so far. [The Srebrenica killing was fully comparable to the massacre of about 22,000 Polish officers who were prisoners of war in Soviet hands. They were killed by order of Stalin in April 1940 in the forest of Katyń. For years the Soviets insisted that this crime had been perpetrated by the Nazis, but finally Gorbachev’s disclosures set the record straight.]

After what happened at Srebrenica the NATO powers mounted punishing air strikes against Serb military positions. These military steps, along with the general war weariness on the part of Serbs in Bosnia and in Serbia proper (which throughout the war had also suffered the effects of trade sanctions) apparently led to a halt in further warfare and an end to more conquest of land. In December 1995 at Dayton, Ohio the three parties ratified most of the gains on the part of the Serbs and provided a frame by which Bosnia -- as one state, but separated into three ethnic regions -- can precariously continue to exist in peace.

I leave you here with your own reflections on these two lessons from the common occurrence of genocides and the precarious attempts at international procedures to avoid them altogether or at least stop them quickly once they are under way. Unfortunately, the

conclusion of our considerations here seems to be that at least from the viewpoint of the perpetrators, genocide is but “war by other means.” By giving it a special name, the international community clearly intended to separate non-permissible, criminal “genocidal” warfare from so-called permissible, “ordinary” warfare. This is no doubt a worthy interim goal. But as shown in this chapter, it is not and cannot be an effective solution. To reach the goal of no more genocides, we have to go beyond genocide proper. With today’s concrete possibility of total extinction, we have to face the issue of war itself. A constructive response to this danger of “humanicide” is not as utopian as it may first appear – as I shall attempt to show in the last chapter of this work in connection with “democratic” peace (Rummel 1997).

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8. On the Number of Rescuers from Nazi Destruction

Overview: Poland was the unhappy country in which the Nazis executed the killing operation of Jews on a truly massive scale. Millions of Jews from Poland and across the entire Nazi-dominated regions of Europe were transported to its death camps. Here the slaughter could not be hidden and helping Jews was officially punished by death.

Opportunities for some individuals to rescue hunted Jews were urgent and frequent. In this historical and geographical context, we deal with the controversial issue of the approximate extent of rescue. We discuss the psychological reasons underlying the tendency to greatly underestimate the number of rescuers and suggest a method of arriving at a fair estimate.

Think of one of the many ordinary Poles who during the Nazi terror risked their lives by extending a helping hand to hunted Jews. They keep hearing the complaining refrain: *Why were there so few?* (Wiesel, 1986). How must these persons feel? What does "few" mean in this context? At what point would this description no longer hold? At 50,000? At 100,000? At 1,000,000? At two or more millions? Is this insistence on the small number of rescuers justified? Or is there perhaps no connection at all between the number of rescuers and the complaining phrase of *so-few*? In this charged atmosphere, the following presents eight objective reasons why the number of recorded Polish rescuers is likely to be a serious underestimation. Each of the eight points by itself would make it reasonable to multiply the recorded number of Polish rescuers of Jews by some number larger than one. Unfortunately, there is no entirely objective way to arrive at firm numbers.

This state of affairs is unsatisfactory largely because of two factors, alluded to at the beginning. There is a strong bias, on the one hand, to underestimate the number of rescuers and, on the other hand – and this is perhaps the most serious consequence of that bias – to present the Holocaust story in a perspective of otherness, unreality and, ultimately, incomprehension.

Eight Points for Estimating the Number of Rescuers

Mainly relying on Tec (1986), I now list eight points which in my view are a reasonable basis for estimating the number of Polish rescuers. I do not believe that points 2 through 7 are in themselves controversial. However, in opposition to point 1, a counter-argument is proposed by those who insist on the fewness of rescuers. I shall turn to it after presenting Point 1.

1. In the vast majority of long-term rescue situation the number of helpers exceeded the number of Jews rescued.

Counter-argument to Point 1: Frequently, a small number of one and the same rescuers helped a great number of Jewish people and did this at different, successive times. As a consequence, none of the further points 2 to 8 would amount to any significant increase in the

number of rescuers. In presenting this counter-argument, Tec (p.83) even goes so far as to suggest that on this basis it would be reasonable to argue the opposite of Point 1, namely, that there were *fewer* Polish rescuers than rescued Jews.

However, I hold that perusal of Tec's own book as well as of other reports of rescue of Jews strongly show two things. First, most rescues were of one or a few people, not a great number at one time, and these were less likely to be discovered and reported. Moreover, even if hypothetically the facts of the counter-argument itself were true, it is unreasonable to make the claim that the estimated increase of number of rescuers on the grounds of Points 2 through 7 would be insignificant. In other words, I suggest that in addition to Point 1, each of the Points 2 through 7 can become the occasion for a serious underestimation of the number of rescuers.

2. Thousands of Poles were executed for helping Jews, often by being murdered on the spot or by the burning down of the building in which both Polish helpers and Jewish victims perished. We have only fragmentary records of these executions.

3. Similarly, thousands of Jews who were helped at one time during the war did not survive to tell the story.

4. Thousands of Jews who during the war "passed" as Poles and were helped by Polish rescuers, for various reasons continued to deny their Jewish origin after the war. Tec (p.235) suggests the number of 20,000.

5. A majority of Poles had to keep their rescue of Jews secret, not merely for fear of denouncement and official German threat of death, but on account of the environment. A strongly anti-Jewish attitude on the part of many Poles was prevalent before and during the war. It was especially virulent immediately after the war (when some Jews attempted to return and claim their belongings), continued during the Communist years and still is strong today. In all these considerations, it is important to keep in mind that there is as world of difference between even the most virulent popular racism and the government-sponsored killing of a race.

6. Unless the rescued surviving Jews took the initiative, there was no ready opportunity for Poles to register acts of rescue. It is probable -- whether for reasons of discretion, personal anti-Jewish experience, or just plain psychological repression -- that only a minority of Jewish survivors came forward with the names and details of their Polish helpers.

7. The Polish rescuers did not consider their actions as something special or heroic. It seemed to them just natural and ordinary, not something to brag or talk about.

8. Thousands of helping acts were done on impulse, on the spur of the moment, lasting no longer than a few seconds to a few hours: such as a quick warning from mortal danger, giving some food or water, showing the way, sheltering from cold or exhaustion for a few hours. None of these acts can be recorded in details, with persons and names counted; yet without them the survival of thousands of Jews would not have been possible.

An Estimate of the Number of Polish Rescuers

On the basis of these eight points, a reasonable estimate of the number of Polish rescuers can be worked out. Iranek-Osmecki (1971) suggests at least one million rescuers. Is this number reasonable?

Consider: At least 50,000 Jews survived the Nazi occupation in Poland (Tec, p.11). We can conservatively estimate that an equal number of Jews attempted to hide but perished in the attempt (Points 2 and 3). Now add to it the 20,000 (Tec, p.235) who after the war continued to deny their religious origin (Point 4). There we have, from the Jewish side, 70,000 surviving Jews (out of a pre-war population of three million) and 120,000 rescue situations. With this as a base, how many Polish rescuers would this involve?

An estimate of three Poles connected with one rescue situation would seem reasonable (Point 1). This leads to an estimate of 360,000. We multiply this by a factor of 2 in order to take account that Jews in hiding frequently had to move from one to another place (Tec, p.80). Now we have 720,000 Poles involved in the long-term rescue of these 120,000 Jews. Add to it an estimate of four short-term rescue encounters for each of the 120,000 Jews (Point 8) and we arrive at an estimate of 1,200,000 Polish rescuers. Note that in this computation we did not even explicitly calculate Points 5 through 7, that is, surviving Jews or Poles who for understandable reasons did not, or had no opportunity, to come forward. There is simply no basis for any numerical estimate. Whatever that number would be, clearly not using it means to underestimate the true number of rescuers.

J. Friedman (1977, p.648 - 654), referring to Poland, remarked at an international historical conference: "If we knew the names of all the noble people who risked their lives to save Jews, the entire area round Yad Vashem ["*Tombstone for the Dead*," the Holocaust memorial in Jerusalem which also lists the names of officially recognized rescuers, the "*Righteous among the nations*"] would be full of trees and would turn into a forest. While wandering through Poland and along her borders during the war and immediately afterwards, I met Polish families who endangered their lives daily and sought no recompense. They were simple people who were motivated by deep personal feelings, but who remained anonymous."

Unfortunately, words such as these fell on deaf ears. Even as they were spoken, the speaker's reply at the conference dismissed the number as unsupported by the official standards of Yad Vashem. That would be the same as limiting an estimate of the number of Roman Catholics to the exceedingly small number of officially canonized saints.

In this connection, Tec (p. 84) explicitly states that of the 189 Polish rescuers of her study – even though she started her inquiry with names from Yad Vashem – less than a quarter had this official title: "There is no disputing that those who have been recognized by Yad Vashem represent but a fraction of those who deserve to be". In other words, just as we would not use

the list of canonized saints as a reasonable basis for estimating the number of Roman Catholics, we cannot refer to Yad Vashem as a reasonable basis for estimating the number of Polish rescuers.

There is one published study of 406 rescuers ("officially" recognized by Yad Vashem) and 126 non-rescuers (as control group) that permits a different approach toward estimating the number of Polish rescuers. In the course of investigating possible personality characteristics of rescuers compared to non-rescuers, the authors (Oliner, 1988, p. 138) state that in the non-rescue control group 32 (25%) reported they were approached for help and 25 (20%) in response provided some short-term help of up to three months shelter.

The implications of this statistic are startling. Remember, this is a control group of 126 non-rescuers, that is, Polish people who were selected on the basis of not having been recognized as rescuers by Yad Vashem. They were presumed not to have given help to Jews. Then it turned out that 20% of those so-called non-rescuers had given at least some short time help. If these people are anywhere typical of non-Jewish Poles under the Nazis, the amount of 20% represents a huge number of many millions. I was truly astonished when I read these numbers and wonder whether the authors fully realized to what extent this number flatly contradicts their emphasis throughout the book on the presumed small number of rescuers.

Psychological Factors Underlying the Underestimation

As I have pointed out, the underestimation of non-Jewish rescuers is but one facet of what I cannot help but call the traditional myth of "why-so-few." This seems to me nothing short of a tragedy. For without some resolution on this issue the story of the Holocaust remains unreal and alien, as something that "others" have done. It cannot be assimilated and become a positive part of *our* history. And even as the Holocaust at that time threatened Jewish survival, our present history has now become a precarious choice between human survival or nuclear -- or otherwise -- extinction. "How many righteous Christians were there?" asks Tec (p.83). "Exact figures are elusive. What we have instead are estimates that vary with the particular assumptions on which they are based... I believe that knowing the exact number of the righteous is not as important as understanding who they were and what motivated them toward this life-threatening behavior."

I fully agree with this proposition. But why then would I here make the attempt of estimating the number of Polish rescuers? First, as far as I know, this attempt has never been made with any methodological precision. Yad Vashem may appear to be such an attempt. But in reality, as I said earlier, it is nothing of the sort and has never meant to be an objective estimate of the number of rescuers. Second, I believe that for the sake of historical objectivity the bias for underestimation must be recognized for what it is. Third, I would argue that the search for specific psychological characteristics of rescuers, the search for the "altruistic

personality" is even more futile than what Tec calls "the search for the elusive number." And yet this search for a particular personality of rescuers seems to dominate the research of those who study the rescue attempts during the Holocaust.

The reason then why I refer to specific numbers has to do with what Tec called the assumptions behind the estimates. And to examine these assumptions is, I believe, absolutely vital to a genuine reception of the story of the Holocaust. As one writer studying the Polish situation (Hoffmann, 1997, p.243) says: "For the survivors who felt so radically abandoned and for Poles who feel that their national character has been impugned, the question of proportions becomes important. Were there more Poles who helped, or more who harmed?" Now I do not believe that we should ask for exact numbers or frame the comparative question: "which group is bigger?". Rather, we should feel confident to say that in Poland as in other countries during the Nazi terror there were many millions of us (humans, Europeans, Poles, etc., including some Jews) who harmed the Jews just as there were many millions of us who helped the Jews.

Hoffmann (1997, pp.245 ff.) reminds her readers how "the Nazi occupation created a world of monstrously inverted morality. It was a world in which the ordinary qualities of decency, responsibility toward others, concern, and compassion were criminalized, and in which rank brutality and sadism were normalized... In this atmosphere there were some who took the new rules as permission to behave swinishly, and yet others who felt liberated by them into bestiality and violence... But there were others who found it in themselves to behave with common decency, at a time when such behavior required uncommon courage and selflessness. Even the motives of the rescuers cannot always be understood in ordinary moral terms."

There is a strong bias or predisposition on the part of Jewish scholars to emphasize "the abandonment of the Jews" and to react to reports of rescue with a complaining and objectively unrealistic "Why were there so few?" This phrase, enshrined over the years in literature and folk lore is subjectively comprehensible as a psychological defense structure. In view of the difficulty of articulating the enormity of the evil and of the loss suffered on the Jewish side it may appear justifiable as an emotion-laden expression. There is no question that from the victims' viewpoint the feeling of total abandonment was absolutely real and so was the cry of: *Why were there so few helpers?* This cry mirrors and expresses an experience that cannot be adequately put into words. To realize the desperate pleas for help from the Warsaw ghetto to the outside world just before the final uprising is an heart rendering exercise that defies description. In this sense, the phrase "so few" has nothing to do with numbers and no actual amount of numbers could "demonstrate" that this phrase is appropriate or misplaced.

Nonetheless, this genuine attitude of desperation amounts to a bias that cannot but seriously underestimate the number of rescuers. And since rescuers and rescue attempts are an integral part of the Holocaust story -- and are as such recognized in Jerusalem's Holocaust

memorial -- a fair estimate of the approximate number of people involved seems appropriate. The aim of that estimate is then not to change the attitude – which, as I said earlier, has really nothing to do with numbers and, as shown in the following, is impervious to rational arguments.

Rabbi Schulweis, in the preface to the Oliner book (p.XIX) refers to "scattered sparks of sanctity in the midst of impenetrable darkness" and to the "scandalously few acts of altruism." Yet without noticing the contradiction, he continues: " Many of the millions of Jews who survived the slaughter could not have done so without the care and protection of non-Jews in every country the Nazis occupied." Millions of rescuers of Jews? Even to mention this number as a possibility meant to encounter protests and blame for an anti-Jewish stance. In fact, the Oliners go on to report the shouting accusation of survivors in the presence of acknowledged rescuers. Some survivors feared that highlighting rescue activities could "lull people into believing that the horrors never occurred... The memories of those years are too surfeited with tragedy to allow for much goodness."

As long as this bias toward underestimation remains a given in Jewish Holocaust literature it is not easy for any scholars, particularly for Poles, to assert what they consider objectively grounded historical facts. From a psychological perspective it is comprehensible that Poles would resent the constant insistence on Jewish losses and the blame of Polish abandonment. The extent of Polish losses, if not equal, is massive and the help given to Jews by Poles – under risk of death – is also massive. In short, objectivity is suspect and has no voice in a field dominated by emotional biases.

In conclusion, I point to the connection between the bias of *underestimating* the number of rescuers and of *overestimating* the number of perpetrators of Nazi evil (as for instance in the case of referring to Germans in general as Hitler's "willing executioners" – see the next chapter). This bias reflects, as I insisted throughout the text, a psychological tendency to see things in black and white and take an undifferentiated view of things. Even more basically, it means to identify ourselves with the good, the Us, and differentiate ourselves from the bad, the Other.

One Polish contemporary of the Nazi destruction of a Jewish Shtetl is proud of those nine Polish families that have been honored in Jerusalem as Righteous Gentiles. Referring to those rescuers, this eyewitness believes "that they represent the Polish norm. In his view," continues the author (Hoffman, p. 246), " the murderers and informers were the aberration, the inevitable marginal fringe of people all too easily prodded into crime in the climate of Nazi lawlessness." Significantly, the author recognizes that today the "survivors believe just the opposite. They think the anti-Semitic hatred was the Polish norm, and that during the war, the anti-Semitism lurking in every Pole came out and showed its true virulence."

Far from facilitating a true grasp of the enormity of the Nazi evil and the continuous

potential danger of a destructive racist ideology, both the respective underestimation of helpers and the overestimation of perpetrators contribute to a picture of unreality. This turns the story of the Holocaust into something that concerns the Other, not Us. A halfway reasonable and objective differentiation would focus on the quality of participation in either the killing or the helping of Jews. Only in this manner can we arrive at a reasonable estimation of the number of rescuers or the number of perpetrators. This would seem to me to be a sound first step in making the story of the Holocaust real and fruitful as human history.

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9. On the Number of Perpetrators of Destruction

Overview : An attempt is made to define in a morally serious manner the notion of “Hitler’s willing executioners.” I suggest that a sober estimate can reasonably conclude that about eleven percent of the German adult population during war time would deserve this designation. Issues of moral accountability and of Germans’ awareness of the Holocaust are discussed.

Goldhagen (1997) gives the impression, indeed, attempts to prove – albeit in a pseudo-scientific fashion – that practically all adult Germans were what he calls “Hitler’s willing executioners.” However, before we could be justified in making such a statement, it behooves us to make some qualitative differentiations on the issue of accountability for the Nazi slaughter of the Jews. For this purpose I propose a graduated series of concrete instances of action that should give us a basis for assigning degrees of moral accountability, from clear and active intent to the passivity of an unaware bystander. Historical objectivity would seem to require nothing less. Only after describing in some morally serious way what “willing executioner” means can we go ahead with a sober attempt at estimating their actual number.

My aim is an attempt of dividing the total adult German war-time population – estimated at 41 million – into a number of groups based on the issue of moral accountability for the slaughter of Jews. I shall first discuss the moral characteristics of each group, using concrete action-instances that relate to the government-sponsored execution of the Jews. After these preliminary moral considerations it should be possible to attach some estimated number to the notion of “willing executioner.”

A Moral Accountability Scale: Groups 1 through 6

Here then is a list of what I would call nine groups in a sequence or series of moral accountability relative to the slaughter of Jews:

1. Fanatic initiators
2. Fanatic collaborators
3. Ordinary direct collaborators
4. Active indirect collaborators
5. Passive indirect collaborators
6. Remote collaborators
7. Bystanders
8. Passive resisters
9. Active principled resisters

Groups 1 and 2 are designated as “fanatics.” These are the people who were convinced of the need and the rightness of killing Jews and showed this attitude in their everyday actions, either by ordering the killing (Group 1) or by enthusiastically collaborating (Group 2).

The physical elimination of Jews was beginning to be seriously contemplated at the end

of 1941 (See Chapter 4). By that time it had become clear that the Soviet Union was not going to collapse as easily as Hitler after his easy victory over France had expected. However bizarre or self-deceptive it may sound, the people in these groups could now see the killing of Jews within the context of what seemed to them as Germany's legitimate life and death struggle against Communist Russia or what they called "Jewish Bolshevism."

Germans of these two groups were the core Jew killers. They held key positions in the German government and the various Nazi hierarchies, such as the SS. They attended the January 1942 Wannsee conference where the "Final Solution" was discussed. They were on the staff of the death and concentration camps. From a moral standpoint it is important to note that they exercised psychological and ideological terror over the rest of the German people, including the next large group of "ordinary" collaborators in killing.

Group 3 is designated as "ordinary direct collaborators" where the word "ordinary" is used in contrast to the word "fanatic," characteristic of the first two groups. I designate as "ordinary direct collaborators" people who unlike the fanatic initiators or collaborators, did not make the killing of Jews a primary and explicit aim. Rather, they were doing what they considered their patriotic duty even if that happened to be the elimination of Jews. Thus by their actions rather than by their moral intention they were involved in the killing operations, at different degrees of authority.. This Group 3 would encompass such diverse people as the reluctant Major Trapp who commanded killing squads in Poland and the German soldiers under his command (see Chapter 4) as well as the scheming SS officer Waldheim who signed the transportation order of Jews from Greece to Auschwitz. [He later became secretary general of the UN and president of Austria.] It would include railroad personnel responsible for the transport to the death camps as well as engineers who designed the killing installations for the camps as well as the managers and executives who arranged these business deals.

Now in terms of moral accountability I believe we must clearly separate Group 3, the “direct collaborators,” discussed above, from Groups 4, 5 and 6, the “indirect” and “remote collaborators.” By this term I refer to people who in their daily war-time activity had nothing directly to do with the killing of Jews. However, they may find themselves in a situation where they could become indirect or remote collaborators in a chain that ultimately leads to the killing of Jews. I shall illustrate and distinguish these three groups by using the hypothetical situation of a – by no means infrequent – chance encounter between a non-Jew, either in person or by hearsay, with Jews in hiding from the Nazi persecution.

Group 4, “active indirect collaborators,” would be people who in this situation *actively* denounced to the Nazi authorities a person hiding Jews, perhaps out of fear of being themselves reported to the authorities or for the sake of a concrete reward of food. The betrayer of Ann Frank’s hiding in Amsterdam belongs in this category. With this act they made themselves morally accountable as indirectly supporting the regime of Jew-killing.

A lesser degree of moral accountability attaches to persons who may refuse to offer help to a Jew in hiding asking them for help without, however, reporting the Jew to the Nazis. I would call people in this Group 5 “passive indirect collaborators.” By *not* doing something, they indirectly contribute to the killing operations. The reasons for the refusal to act helpfully may vary from fear of punishment (including fear for one’s own life) to lack of means (food, space) or plain unwillingness to get involved; and all these factors would change the nature and degree of moral accountability. Note in these two groups how an *accidental* encounter with Jews can put someone in a position where a person is suddenly forced to make a moral choice between being an active indirect collaborator in the slaughter of Jews (Group 4) or an active principled resister (Group 9). This person cannot remain a bystander. There is no middle way. We shall come back to this point later on.

I refer to people in Group 6 as “remote collaborators.” This is morally the most difficult case. There were millions of Germans whose “job” (labor, business, military) turned out to be some *more or less remote link* in the chain that ultimately resulted in the killing of Jews. They could be people employed in far off sections of the rail or postal service, in some specific civil service division, or in some particular factories or business firms. Ordinarily, they would not “know” the ultimate result of their immediate actions. Of course, they did not need to know. Moreover, in the instance of the Holocaust, great efforts were made to hide from the Germans the ultimate truth. More important, people in this group would not *want* to know; indeed, trying to find out could entail significant risks. And finally, what *would* and what *could* they do with that knowledge? The knowledge issue by itself deserves a brief digression on the controversial question of German awareness of the Holocaust.

Were Germans Aware of the Holocaust?

This is perhaps the place first to remind ourselves that in Germany itself between 1933 and 1940 Jews were humiliated, expropriated and forcibly expelled, but there was no wide

spread government-sponsored killing of them. At that time considerably more mentally defective Germans were killed in euthanasia programs until protest by Catholic bishops stopped this in August 1940. The Holocaust was perpetrated after the start of the war in the East. It was in the fall of 1941 that the systematic killing of Jews was first done in the death squads that followed the army, later on in the death camps of occupied Poland. At that time about 150,000 Jews (from a total of about 600,000) remained in Germany and Austria. By the end of the following year (1942) the vast majority of these had been transported to the camps in the East where nearly all perished. A few thousand, particularly Jews married to non-Jews, even survived the war years in the open.

We turn now to the controversial issue of the extent to which people in Germany knew or could know about the industrial killing of the Holocaust. On this issue *a sound theory of knowledge is more helpful than so-called historical facts*. Knowledge is not an all or none matter. The idea of deliberate genocidal killing of millions of healthy persons from Germany and across the occupied countries in Europe – in the midst of a protracted war and its need for labor – rather than using them in helping the war effort, is inherently unbelievable and irrational, quite apart from organizational and moral considerations. It could not readily sink into a comprehensible awareness until after the end of the war when pictures and reports from eye-witnesses of the liberating armies were spread across the news media.

Thus, on the part of the vast majority of Germans, awareness of the Holocaust in its full dimension was at best at the level of a vague war-time rumor. There was no serious need to entertain this awareness as a concrete possibility. And there was really nothing you could do about it. A knowledge on which you cannot act at all, not even in open discussion, is hardly the occasion around which you form a meaningful awareness. Consequently, there were only few Germans who for some principled reason went out of their way to scrutinize scarce information on the fate of the Jews and share it with a hard-to-get audience. Of course, this was also the main reason why millions of Jews in what we now would call self-deception – aided by the deliberate deceptions on the part of the Nazis – continued to obey the German orders until literally death was upon them.

Groups 7, 8 and 9

We return now to what is probably the largest proportion within Nazi Germany of the war years, the group of bystanders who were neither directly nor indirectly involved in the slaughter of the Jews – but also did nothing actively against the Nazi regime. These people comprise Groups 7 and 8, the bystanders and the passive resisters. By definition, in relation to the Holocaust, they were passive insofar as they did not know about the Jew killing and apparently did no action that related to it. I will say more on these bystanders and passive resisters in the concluding moral reflections.

People in Group 9 were the active German resisters. By definition, they were morally principled people who took on an active principled stand against the Nazi ideology and policies.

They were able to recognize the Nazi misdeeds as morally shameful atrocities. Many of them were actively hostile to the Nazis long before the Holocaust came to be executed. Consequently their hostility was not primarily due to this particular atrocity. To the chagrin of some Jewish commentators resisters did not seem to pay special attention to the Holocaust. Where there is such an abundance of moral atrocities we should not be surprised that resisters refer to those atrocities that take place close to home. As we reminded you earlier the slaughter of Jews, while initiated and organized by Germans, did not take place within Germany.

In Group 9 were also a not inconsiderable number of people who initially cooperated with the Nazis but after a short period of disillusionment turned away in disgust. “We have fallen into the hands of criminals. How could I foresee that?” said Dr. Schacht in 1937, after resigning as German secretary of commerce (cited in Balfour 1988, p.3). Similar sentiments were voiced in military circles where, as we shall learn in the next chapter, conspiratorial movements against Hitler were in operation as early as 1938, that is again, long before the start of the Holocaust.

Numbers and Percentages

As to the actual numbers and percentages that go with the aforementioned nine groups of German adults I first present a quote from a text of Balfour (1988). This author is of the opinion that at the end of the war, “the hard core of Nazi supporters amounted to about eleven percent of the population, or between 4 and 5 millions. Opposite to them stood a slightly smaller number of hostile activists. Between these extremes there were about 25 percent ‘followers with reservations’ and about 15 percent inactive dissenters. In the middle came a block of perhaps 40 percent who can aptly be described as the ‘don’t-bother-me vote’ “ (p. 56). And Balfour adds in a footnote that “Goebbels in a diary entry for 4 April 1945 put the proportion of active party members at ten percent of the population.” The author continues significantly: “It should be emphasized that these figures are not based merely on personal impressions but on systematically obtained facts. Anyone who wishes to disagree with them must demonstrate the invalidity of the statistical base” (p. 274).

From what has been said so far, it can therefore be reasonably concluded that at most perhaps 11%, that is, people in Groups 1, 2, (the “fanatics”) and 3 (the “direct collaborators”) on the moral accountability series could legitimately be called “Hitler’s willing executioners” in the killing of the Jews. This is still a big number of about 4½ million Germans, but it is nowhere near all the Germans. They alone could be said to have been aware that their actions were directly connected to the slaughter of the Jews. From a moral viewpoint, it is important to stress that these millions had a choice. Particularly those in Group 3, the “non-fanatical direct collaborators,” could have declined to participate in the enterprise of killing without serious consequences for their own lives or careers. Remember also that for many of them the direct killing of evidently innocent civilians (including children) came initially as an unpleasant shock; yet not collaborating during war time would have been a very difficult

psychological step in view of the traditional peer pressure and military comradeship during war time.

In addition to these 11% or 4½ million fanatics and direct collaborators, Balfour estimated that 25 %, or about 10 million adult Germans were “followers with some reservation.” I would align those with the vast majority of people in Groups 4, 5, and 6 on the moral accountability series. Then comes the largest group on the series, Group 7, the passive “bystanders,” comprising about 40%, that is, about 16 million Germans. This is followed by people who can be called hostile to the Nazis. However within this group, the larger proportion, about 15% or 6 million Germans, are designated as “inactively hostile” to the Nazi regime. This is our Group 8, the “passive resisters.” [The Germans themselves often referred to people in this group as “the inner emigration.”] They are not always easily distinguished from the preceding Group 7, the passive “bystanders.” Finally we have about 10%, or about 4 million Germans who were called “active hostile” by Balfour. They clearly are the active principled resisters on our moral accountability series.

Some Moral Reflections

Consider the following moral dilemma which I briefly touched at the beginning of this chapter. Let us assume that during the war, a Polish peasant who during his life perhaps had never met, nor given a serious thought to Jews. He harbors no ill feeling against them. He is now suddenly approached by a desperate Jewish family fleeing for their life from the Nazi terror. According to our initial designation the peasant would have been very much a passive bystander (Group 7) until this moment when the chance encounter with a Jewish family forces him to take a moral stand whether to help or to harm. This could change his moral status anywhere from Group 3 to Group 9. He could, as it were, instantly become a hero if he shelters them at the risk of his own life, or a criminal if out of fear for his own life he denounces them to the Nazi authorities. Or he could do something in between, hurtful or harmful. What he can no longer do is to remain an unaffected passive bystander.

This is but one illustration of how difficult it is to make any global judgments for these times of unprecedented evil. Let somebody wiser than Goldhagen pronounce just judgment. If in the state of terror and war, “innocent bystanders” of the Nazi atrocities can instantly become “active collaborators” in the Nazi killing of Jews or “heroic rescuers” in saving Jewish life, this merely means that we all, ordinary humans anywhere, you and I, *could* find ourselves in a similar position. Any definite moral judgment is particularly difficult for Group 6 on the moral accountability scale, the “remote collaborators.” These were people who were *objectively*, even though remotely, connected to the chain of killing, say, as postal or railroad workers.

The moral situation brought about by Hitler’s genocidal furor was such that only through active, principled resistance was it possible to exercise a measure of mature accountability and responsibility. This is a moral task that is probably new in human history, one that today must

be presupposed in all moral calculation: *the task of conserving humankind*. For as I have stressed repeatedly, Hitler's major crime was, in fact, not merely the wanton killing of 5 - 6 million Jews and many million others. His mad desire was to subject the whole of humankind to his racial ideology. He wanted absolute dictatorial powers over the entire globe so as to be the final arbiter of what it means to be human and to what extent a person deserves to be called, and be treated as, a human.

Having just discussed that through a chance encounter so-called innocent bystanders can turn into evil collaborators, we can profitably reflect on the opposite outcome, that is, passive bystanders becoming heroic rescuers. When "heroes" of the Holocaust – non-Jews who saved Jewish lives by risking their own lives -- were interviewed with the aim of discovering some unique psychological attribute, the interviewers were consistently surprised and basically disappointed (see the previous chapter and Chapter 12). From their own standpoint, the rescuers believed they had done nothing extraordinary, nothing, they thought, that somebody else would not also do ("Would you not do the same thing?"). Without the chance opportunity of a concrete encounter with a human emergency, those whom we now call "heroic rescuers" may have remained what most people in war-time Germany were, passive bystanders.

In conclusion, for those who have not experienced the specific Nazi terror of tyranny and war, it seems both wise and just to be cautious and generous before rushing into a global moral condemnation of an entire people. If a chance encounter can turn "ordinary" bystanders into "heroic" rescuers or "criminal" killers, we as students of the Holocaust may never know how we ourselves would behave in similar circumstances.

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10. On the Mentality of a Person of Destruction

Overview: We learn of Hitler's world view that he first assimilated from the social mood of his times around World War I. This view shaped the entire history of Nazism, from Hitler's meteoric rise to power to the unleashing of a war of destruction including the Holocaust. Hitler acted out an apocalyptic vision of saving the world in a last gigantic struggle against imaginary enemies. We examine the psychology of a charismatic leader whose vicious mentality effectively attracted millions of followers. This led to unprecedented murder and violence and finally the rapid self-destruction of Hitler's creation: Nazi Germany.

The year is 1919, the place Munich. Refugees from the Bolshevik revolutions in Russia and other regions pour into the city. In the wake of the catastrophe of World War I, the totally unexpected defeat of Germany and the general collapse and revolutions in many European countries, in Munich too for a few months a Communist government is established. It is in turn violently suppressed by nationalistic-military forces. In the midst of this social turmoil you read the following "missive from an unnamed Catholic clergyman of Basel" in a local racist paper:

"Dreadful times in which Christian-hating, circumcised Asiatics everywhere are raising their bloodstained hands to strangle us in droves! The butcheries of Christians by the Jew Issachar Zederblum, alias Lenin, would have made even a Genghis Khan blush. In Hungary his pupil Cohn, alias Béla Kun, marched through the unhappy land with a band of Jewish terrorists schooled in murder and robbery, to set up, among brutal gallows, a mobile machine gallows and execute middle-class citizens and peasants on it. A splendidly equipped harem served him, in his stolen royal train, to rape and defile honorable Christian virgins by the dozen. His lieutenant Samuely has had sixty priests cruelly butchered. Their bellies are ripped open, their corpses mutilated, after they have been plundered to their blood-drenched skin. In the case of eight murdered priests it has been established that they were first crucified on the doors of their own churches! The very same atrocious scenes are now reported from Munich" (p. 91) [This and all subsequent page references refer to Fest (1974) on whose work the chapter is chiefly based.]

Read each sentence of this hate-mongering, sadistic diatribe carefully. Imagine the ten, the hundred thousands who get a mental charge out of this fantastic bunch of lies. What should astonish us is not so much the writing itself – madness and hate are part of human psychology – but that there is a receptive audience of masses of people who could fall for it. Clearly, these are not "ordinary" times. Note the major themes of the paragraph: mortal danger to life, property and Christian values along with unthinkable slaughter, rape and torture.

But then, in addition to this core of mentally unstable people driven by social and personal insecurity, fearing imminent danger, despairing of hope, and suffering economic misery, take the millions of "enlightened" Germans. They would feel ashamed being seen reading this blatant

and vicious nonsense. Yet they too have reasons to feel insecure and hurt in their national pride. Many are desperately poor and anxious about their personal future. Many too suffer from acute loss of their previous status and are confused about the republican system of government they feel was imposed on Germany at Versailles. They cannot help thinking that perhaps something true may be behind these (what they consider) political "exaggerations."

One of the eager readers of this article was a 30-year-old Adolf Hitler who at the time was completely unknown. Born in Austria near the German border, and after drifting around in the slums of Vienna, he volunteered in 1914 to join the German army. As a non-commissioned officer he played an unremarkable role during the war. By 1919 he was just beginning to discover his oratory powers. He linked the above-expressed fears of Bolshevism with the need for a cataclysmic struggle of national-racial survival. From this point on Hitler's political career had a meteoric rise so that by 1933 his Nazi Party received just over a third of the vote and was legally installed as Chancellor of Germany.

Three Periods in Hitler's Political Career

Fest (1974) divides Hitler's political life into three periods which he characterizes as 1/ *revolutionary*, 1919 - 1929, 2/ *deceptive-legal*, 1929 - 1939, and 3/ *war-making*, 1939 - 1945.

1/ Within the first ten-year period, 1919 -1929, Hitler's charismatic skills play on the themes of a Jewish-Bolshevist danger and the need for a national-racial struggle. In this way he builds his identity as a political leader with a mass following. He propagates a violent anti-Jewish racism and calls for a radical *revolution* that would bring strength and glory to Germany and put Germany first in the international arena.

2/ During the following ten years, 1929 - 1939, Hitler uses political propaganda at an unprecedented *deceptive* level to establish himself *legally* as Germany's dictator. Amazingly, this deception worked both internally and externally, especially in the years before his seizure of power. Aware of the German dislike of revolution, Hitler refuses against strong internal opposition, to overthrow the democratically elected government by force and insists on waiting for the right occasion – even while deceptively exaggerating the threat of a Bolshevist revolution and using violence to terrorize the population. Both nationally and internationally Hitler takes on the appearance of a respectable political leader.

3/ In the final six years of his life, 1939 -1945, Hitler does away with deceptive tactics and openly acts out the racism of destruction he had propagated in the first period. This destructive ideology propels him and his willing and unwilling followers to wars and misdeeds of destruction that seem to be a qualitative jump in the long "nightmare of history." These actions lead at first to some tremendous military triumphs and atrocious crimes against humanity, but quickly end in total defeat and self-destruction of the Nazi state.

Fest sketched the three phases of this historically fateful career to show the unity of the person whose later destructive actions literally conformed to ideas expressed early in his life. However, during the middle phase, in which he achieved extraordinary political power both

within Germany and internationally, he also used extraordinary dissimulation and self-restraint in a masterly and systematic fashion. In this manner Hitler succeeded in deceiving millions of people, both at home and abroad. Within Germany itself the conservative establishment thought they could "tame" Hitler within the political process, as did the masses of German academics and professionals who soon relented their initial enthusiasm. Even many Jews refused to believe that a nation whose culture they admired and eagerly assimilated could sink to the abysmal level it did until it was too late.

Deception and duplicity were thus prominent features of Hitler's personal make-up, probably to a greater extent than in other deceitful political leaders. Nazism thrived on deception. It also became the favorite excuse of Germans during and after the war when confronted with the inhuman atrocities of the Nazi regime. For instance, common folk would naively say: "If only the Führer knew." The followers wanted to believe that the atrocities were exceptions and perpetrated by unauthorized underlings. The *Führer*, they would say in self-deception, surely would not approve of such dishonorable acts. Similarly, when in the initial phase of his political career Hitler propounded his utterly fantastic goals most people, again in wilful self-deception, were convinced that Hitler just used rhetorical overkill. In hindsight, it turned out that these goals were meant as a concrete political program of war and destruction – that he eventually unleashed in the final phase of his career.

Hitler's Style of Leadership

One reason why there was so much room for deception in the Nazi system was the lack of any articulated Nazi world view. Fest (p. 420) documents that Hitler's political strategies both before and after seizure of supreme power were not based on any organized and well thought-out plan. Of course, Hitler had some quite definite overall goals; but – apart from his fateful decision to personally initiate and direct the war against the Soviet Union – he left it to his associates to work out the detailed paths to reach these goals. Moreover, with an ever expanding Nazi bureaucracy, there was often confusion and interference between different competing authorities. As a result bureaucratic competition encouraged and led to excesses that Hitler could quietly approve without having given explicit orders. This was very much the case with the Final Solution of the Holocaust, as we shall see shortly.

Thus Hitler's way of governing the country was not regulated by an articulated and promulgated plan. He did not make use of regular cabinet meetings. After the forced collapse of the parliamentary republic there were no explicit provisions for making laws or for the formation of a successor government. It was simply taken for granted that the *Führer's* spoken word was the law. With no systematic directions in governmental processes and Hitler's penchant for spontaneous improvisation, it was left to the competing bureaucracies to articulate the laws and put them into practice.

This confusing picture explains why there can be no definitive answer to some urgent questions as to when and how the precise terms of the "Final Solution" originated. In 1923

Hitler cried out: "The Jews are undoubtedly a race, but not human. They cannot be human in the sense of being an image of God, the Eternal. The Jews are the image of the devil. Jewry means the racial tuberculosis of the nations" (p. 209). Had Hitler at this early point decided on a program of killing the Jews? Probably not explicitly. Recent historical models of Jewish persecution were limited to forced expropriation and expulsion. That is precisely what the Nazis did in gradually expanding steps during the first six years of the terror regime. On the other hand, even at this early time, Hitler certainly planned the murderous war of destruction against the Slavic East. Thus killing on a large scale was already on his mind and in this sense the Holocaust was implicitly included.

In early 1943, shortly after the critical defeat at Stalingrad, when the extermination of Jews was well under way, he declared defiantly: "The discovery of the Jewish virus is one of the greatest revolutions which has been undertaken in the world. The struggle we are waging is of the same kind as, in the past century, that of Pasteur and Koch. How many diseases can be traced back to the Jewish virus! We shall regain our health only when we exterminate the Jews" (p. 212). Note how Hitler tried to justify the murderous war against the Soviet Union (which the Germans were just beginning to lose) in terms of the slaughter of Jews (which the Germans were winning). We now know that only a few weeks earlier the Wannsee Conference had for the first time clearly articulated the policy of extermination.

In a strange way, the confusion in his leadership style contributed significantly to the failure of several attempts on Hitler's life. In 1938, an assassination plot was organized by the military high command to prevent a likely war against Czechoslovakia (p. 559). Hitler's order of attack was to have been the critical cue for the conspiracy. However, as we know, because of the West's diplomatic intercession at Munich this cue never came to pass. Thus paradoxically the West by sacrificing Czechoslovakia, not only preserved Chamberlain's so-called "peace in our time" – that lasted but one year and for which he was cheered wildly not only in England or France but to Hitler's disgust in Germany too. Unbeknownst to the diplomats, the Munich agreement also preserved Hitler's career for seven more years in which he could perpetrate his murderous onslaught against the Soviet Union together with the Holocaust of the Jews.

Again the following year in October 1939, after Poland's collapse and France and Britain's declaration of war on Germany, a number of generals at the highest military command conspired to have Hitler declared medically insane and removed from leadership (p. 625). This plot was geared to the date of the planned attack on France but, as before, it collapsed as the date of attack was postponed 29 times (!) between 12 November 1939 and 10 May 1940 -- when it finally took place. Part of the 1939 revolt was the generals' revulsion over the murderous conduct of the war in Poland. When in Hitler's presence the commander-in-chief complained about the frightful, totally unexampled character of the war – what I have here called a *war of destruction* – Hitler exhibited one of his great emotional outbursts. In rage, as if utterly

surprised by the report of alleged atrocities on the part of German forces, he demanded to see documents and asked whether the guilty had been executed (p. 625). He then turned his raging rhetoric against the high command itself accusing it of working against his war efforts. Note here again the glaring features of emotional pretense and deception that in the past had served him so well in his political career.

Hitler's Charismatic Personality

Hitler's personality was like the inside of a volcano. Its smoldering fire had been lit initially by the post-World War I political disruptions that provided a fertile ground for his oratorical and political leadership qualities. He was driven from within by a world view that in Fest's opinion served him more like a perverted *aesthetic* ideal than a *political* program. Thus Hitler said (in 1942): "Anyone who understands National-Socialism only as a political movement knows virtually nothing about it. It is even more than religion; it is the will to a new creation of man" (p. 214). Of course, this is and sounds like the mad speech of a megalomaniac.

But unfortunately for human history, in this case madness was tied to uncommon charismatic qualities of leadership that at that period appealed to the masses. Beginning in 1919 Hitler was fully aware of his own power over people and used it deliberately and deceptively to legally become master of Germany. With this achievement behind him, the volcano could not stop – and this is where Nazism is quite different from Lenin's or Stalin's Communism. As he had used the Party to become master of Germany, Hitler now used Germany to become master of the world.

To achieve this aim he needed war and destruction. And he revelled in contemplating these and in expounding a philosophy of destruction: "War is the most natural, the most ordinary thing. War is constant; war is everywhere. There is no beginning, there is no conclusion of peace. War is life. All struggle is war. War is the primary condition" (p. 608). This from a speech in early 1940 when World War II had just begun. Note Hitler's perverted slant on Darwin's evolutionary theory: "All struggle for existence is war." Similar pseudo-scientific interpretations fueled his destructive racial fantasies.

In preparation for the great war he was going to unleash, Hitler in 1939 told his generals about his mission: "I am risking this war. I have to choose between victory or annihilation. I choose victory. It is not one single problem that is at stake, but whether the nation is to be or not to be... I must in all modesty mention my own person as irreplaceable. Neither a military nor a civilian person could replace me. The attempts at assassination may be repeated" (p. 610). There was, in fact, no real danger for the safety of Germany at all except in Hitler's own delusional fantasy. In Hitler's mentality, war and destruction were more important even than Germany itself: "Germany would defend herself to the utmost; at the very worst, all will be annihilated," Hitler exclaimed just before attacking France in 1940 (p. 620). And in late 1941 as his attack against Russia came to a first halt he remarked; "If the German people are no longer so strong and ready for sacrifice that they will stake their own blood on their existence,

they deserve to pass away and be annihilated by another, stronger power"(p. 655). This is a clear illustration of Hitler's self-destructive tendencies which he fully acted out in the final phase of the war.

An end-of-world mood was typical of the Europe of Hitler's youth (Vienna's *fin-de-siècle*) and from that time onward the idea of a cosmic struggle preoccupied his imagination. His 1924 book, *Mein Kampf* (*My Struggle*), shows him obsessed with the notion of a world-wide disease, with viruses, termites, and the tumors of humanity. "Hitler," writes Fest (p. 207), "was convinced that he was in the midst of a titanic struggle whose importance outweighed any events of the moment. He felt himself to be that other force which hurls evil back to Lucifer in order to save the universe." These fantastic ideas of an imminent world catastrophe occupied Hitler's mental landscape continuously and pushed him into the actions of war and destruction even as they imbued him with the charismatic aura of a savior ("*Heil Hitler!*").

Nowhere was Hitler's charismatic personality more evident than in the party's staging of spectacular shows and mass events. They offered a folkish collective warmth that made people feel good. It did not matter to the spellbound audience that the ingenuity of empty showmanship and negative propaganda was not matched by a corresponding constructive political program. Here is an example of a typical speech by Hitler, delivered in 1932: "Starting with the day of the revolution [1918] up to the epoch of subjugation and enslavement [Versailles], up to the time of treaties and emergency decrees, we see failure upon failure, collapse upon collapse, misery upon misery... Everything that formerly stood firm has changed, everything that formerly seemed great has been overthrown. Only one thing has remained preserved for us: The men and parties responsible for the misfortunes. They are still here today" (p. 330). Newspapers -- that would be censored or closed within a year -- reporting on these mass events ridiculed the Nazi program as "will without idea," paraphrasing Schopenhauer's work, *The World as Will and Idea*.

Thus it was not the content of the speech but the personal magnetism of the orator that really counted in Hitler's rise to power. "Nazism is a charismatic rather than an ideological movement," says Fest (p. 327), it is "not looking to a program but looking up to leader." [Note again how different charismatic Nazism was from ideological Soviet Communism.] Hitler's personal magnetism was truly phenomenal. On that personal base he established himself as a political leader. Most importantly, Hitler happened to live at a historical place and time that was probably uniquely susceptible to the psychological phenomenon of a dictatorial leader. Hitler was in good company in the undemocratic world of Mussolini, Stalin, Franco, and many other minor dictators of the period and for a time seemed to dominate them all.

In March 1938 when German forces occupied Austria, the aging psychologist Freud was living in Vienna. Some years earlier Freud had reflected on the leader-follower relation and on the psychological configuration that could explain it. He applied his theory of libidinal binding -- basically, being or falling in love -- to this relation in the following manner. Each one of the

many followers, Freud thought, appears to be *libidinally attached to the leader*; thus he becomes for the followers a kind of collective ideal and conscience (superego). In contrast, the leader in turn is *attached to no one in particular, except to the general ideal*. It is precisely that abstract ideal made concrete and incorporated in the leader that attracts the masses.

A theory like this seems to be needed to convey the sexually charged atmosphere of what Fest (pp.323 -29) describes as these "heady festivals of released repression" during Hitler's political mass meetings. In Fest's words, Hitler "whipped the audience into a kind of collective orgy, all waiting tensely for the moment of release, the orgasm that manifested itself in a wild outcry. The parallel is too patent to be passed over; it lets us see Hitler's oratorical triumphs as surrogate actions of a churning sexuality unable to find its object. No doubt there was a deeper meaning to Hitler's frequent comparison of the masses to 'woman.' And we need only look at the corresponding pages of *Mein Kampf*, at the wholly erotic fervor that the idea and image of the masses aroused in him as he stood on the platform high above the masses filling the arena – his masses. Solitary, unable to make contact, he more and more craved such collective unions ... The sound recordings of the period clearly convey the peculiarly obscene, copulatory character of mass meetings: the silence at the beginning, as of a whole multitude holding its breath; the short shrill yappings; the minor climaxes and first sounds of liberation on the part of the crowd; finally the frenzy, more climaxes, and then the ecstasies released by the finally unblocked oratorical orgasm... With wild explosive movements, driving his metallicly transformed voice to its highest pitch, he would hurl out the words. Quite often, in the furor of his conjuring, he would cover his grimacing face with his clenched fists and close his eyes, surrendering to the spasms of his transposed sexuality... When he spoke the masses met, hailed, and idolized themselves. An exchange of pathologies took place, the union of individual and collective crises in heady festivals of released repression." Quite obviously, emotions, sexual or otherwise, were running wild.

Again and again we must ask ourselves: How could hundreds of thousands, no, millions of educated citizens of "the land of poets, artists, philosophers and scientists" succumb to such crude magnetism? It has often been said that in other countries the great depression did not lead, as it did in Germany, "to an overwhelming crisis that destroyed all political, moral, and intellectual standards and was felt to be something far greater than its specific causes: a shattering of faith in the existing order of the world... Weary of everlasting troubles, their psychic resistance worn thin by war, defeat, and inflation, sick of democratic rhetoric with its constant appeals to reason and sobriety, people let their emotions run rampant"(p. 268). Together with a grasp of Germany's peculiar history (Chapter 6), I can think of no better explanation for Hitler's meteoric rise to power than Freud's leadership model. In the particular place and time of history, people who despaired of the existing order were ready to fall for a charismatic leader's promise of a new order.

In the circle of his own party leadership Hitler was prepared to show his real self; but

facing the masses he was content to play the game of popular mass adulation. Clearly, his aim was to shape the masses into blind followers and the party into a blind instrument of his will. In order to create an aura of mystique, the participants in a meeting were habitually sworn to secrecy. I have mentioned earlier that his style of governing was based on spontaneous oral remarks. There are, in fact, no written notes of his apart from his 1924 book which was sold in millions of copies. The extent to which Hitler disliked ideological perspectives can be gaged from the fact that no discussion about this book, not even printed or oral quotes were permitted.

In the following quote of 1930 where he addressed his party comrades note how Hitler articulates his own role in words reminiscent of Freud's model of a leader: "With us, the Führer [the leader] and the idea are one and the same, and every party comrade has to do what the Führer commands, for *he embodies the idea* and *he alone knows its ultimate goal*... I am a socialist of an entirely different type... the great mass of the workers don't want anything but bread and circuses... We want an elite of the new master class who will not be motivated by any morality and pity, but who will realize clearly that they are entitled to rule because of their superior race and who will ruthlessly maintain and secure this role over the broad masses" (p. 279).

This quote also stresses the theme of moral ruthlessness which was at the core of Hitler's personality. Freud had suggested that the leader literally becomes the conscience (or the superego) of his followers. [Nazi criminals would later routinely invoke this very principle to avoid personal responsibility.]: "We must be cruel", Hitler said in another speech (p. 342): "We must recover the capacity to commit cruelties with a clear conscience. Only in this way can we expel our nation's softheartedness and sentimental philistinism, this *Gemütlichkeit* [feeling at ease] and easygoing evening-beer mood. We have no time for fine feelings. We must compel our nation to greatness if it is to fulfill its historical task." This speech was made to party leaders in August 1932 when Hitler's political career hung in the balance. Five Nazis had just been sentenced to be executed for trampling a Communist to death. Hitler persuaded the chancellor to commute the sentence to life imprisonment – from which the criminals were released as soon as Hitler came to power. On that occasion Hitler openly embraced the murderous violence of killers and scorned the popular outcry against it as soft sentimentality.

In fact, perceived violence and terror did not hurt Hitler's popularity, neither before nor after his seizure of power in January 1933. It was seen as an unpleasant but perhaps necessary byproduct of a ruthless energy and determination, something Germans had not experienced in any of the previous republican governments. They liked the change from social turmoil to discipline and order, from fragile and constantly changing coalitions to a strong leader. They benefitted from the economic upturn, chiefly due to rapid rearmament, and were astonished at the remarkable diplomatic successes in the international arena. For a few years the broad masses got indeed their "bread and circuses."

Hitler's Final Gamble of War and Destruction

Even though the masses bought, or had to buy, Hitler's book, it was never carefully

read or taken seriously as a political program. What the masses could not know was that their *Führer's* energy was chiefly fueled by fantastically cruel aspirations of war and destruction that he could barely contain. Hitler wrote in the 1926 edition of the book "The giant empire in the East is ripe for collapse. And the end of Jewish rule will also be the end of Russia as a state. We have been chosen by fate as witnesses of a catastrophe which will be the mightiest confirmation of the soundness of the race theory" (p. 217). What is unique and truly astounding is the fact that within fifteen years the person who wrote these mad lines found himself in a position of power to attempt to realize the fantasies. At the same time, these compulsive fantasies also led to egregious military errors and made his war strategies inflexible and ultimately self-defeating. The volcano within Hitler's personality had finally erupted and the person of destruction was impatient to let the ashes and lava fall where it may.

This then was Hitler's final gamble when he forced Germany into a war, first 1939 against Poland which resulted in being at war with the West – a situation contrary to Hitler's own admonitions to avoid a war on two fronts. Then, having defeated France in 1940 and quite unrealistically expecting England's neutrality, Hitler in 1941 unleashed the war he always wanted, the war against the giant Russian empire in the East. Now he saw himself playing out the mental aspirations of his youth and thus conducted this war more on the basis of these fantasies than in a realistic and responsible fashion. All the previous years were to him but preparation for this cataclysmic event. He was going to remake the world according to his vision or failing that, hurl himself and the world into the abyss.

Withal unlike the time before World War I, post-war Europe could not engender a war enthusiasm that would match Hitler's mentality. On the contrary, with the catastrophic war losses in recent memory, people were slow to believe that any national leader would really wish to start a war. Disbelief in Hitler's real intentions can well explain the West's desperate appeasement attempts of 1938. At that time Hitler is said to have expressed deep disappointment at having been prevented from fighting. But he could also see that his own people while cheering his diplomatic successes were not enthusiastic about fighting a war. This experience made him even more overweening in his impatience to fight the war he always wanted, the war against the Soviet Union. He firmly believed that the West would never have the stamina or resources to take a serious military stand against him.

I have mentioned before that Germany's military leaders twice, in 1938 and 1939, planned Hitler's overthrow to avert the disaster of a war. Years before, when masses of Germans voted for Hitler they could dismiss the warning "A vote for Hitler is a vote for war" as election propaganda. During the phase of dissimulation when Hitler needed to attract votes, he was too good a politician not to know that votes could not be gained by advocating war. Now in 1938 Hitler, firmly in power, had reversed a good part of the hated Versailles treaty without a shot being fired and the German masses could feel content and vindicated.

Just as there was no enthusiasm in Germany for Hitler's love of war there was no

enthusiasm for Hitler's hate of Jews. Granted, people were not overly disturbed about discriminatory laws against Jews, especially where it removed economic competitors. But that does not mean that Germans in general welcomed violence and murder perpetrated against Jews. In fact, after being in power for nearly six years, the Nazi Party in November 1938 had to bring in outsiders to orchestrate what they claimed to be spontaneous attacks against synagogues and Jewish property. Hoping to tap the springs of latent antisemitism the Party expected to incite the masses to the point of furious rage. They did not succeed. The infamous *Kristallnacht* (*Night of the Broken Glass*) remained a staged event that shocked the great masses of Germans as it did people outside Germany.

Within a year World War II had started with Hitler's 1939 attack against Poland, followed two years later with the attack against the Soviet Union. Germans really had no choice but to go along with what Hitler had prepared for them. In 1943, by the time the Soviet Union started effectively to oppose the German invaders, people in Germany realized too late what they did and what they did not get from Hitler and his Nazi party. They got a murderous war and atrocious crimes that would finally destroy the Nazi empire; and what they did not get was a reality-based way of life or a normal national existence. However, war and terror effectively prevented this realization to sink in until after about 50 million people were dead and Nazi Germany was totally defeated. Imagining the phenomenon of Nazism and its unspeakable horrors we cannot but agree with Hitler's boast that his person was indeed indispensable and there would have been no Nazism as we know it without him. Not many persons have had a similar historical impact

. When the author Fest asks (pp. 373-384) whether there was anything *specifically German* in Nazism, he focuses entirely on the mentality of Hitler and his flight into speculative fantasy, away from concrete political reality. Fest believes that the German masses with their known adulation of *Kultur* and bookish ideas were fascinated by the fantasy character of Nazism. This fantasy, I believe, clouded their sense of a reality-based morality and permitted the perpetration of the horrors associated with Hitler. Moreover, this predilection for fantasy, away from political reality is itself one of the notorious weaknesses of past German history. On this point I refer back to Chapter 6 in which I argue that an unhealthy and specifically German political tradition prepared the way for Hitler's Nazism.

All this fantasy, Fest adds, was linked to another typical German trait, an uncompromising "I can do no other" attitude that was inflexible, ready to face self-destruction and intellectual abyss. What Germans in 1933 did not know until it was too late was that Hitler was living in such a fantasy world of an imminent catastrophe, with no constructive program, apart from an imaginary dream of a changed, purified humankind. They were sitting on a deadly volcano that could not stop until it erupted in a general conflagration of death and destruction. Only within that deadly frame can we begin to comprehend the Jewish Holocaust as the horrifying instance of a destructive inhumanity, nourished by morbid fantasies, yet perpetrated and suffered by humans

like you and me.

Was Hitler Mad?

You have heard me often enough refer to Hitler's *mad fantasies*. These and similar comments may make you think that only a mad person could have wreaked such unspeakable moral horror. It would indeed be comforting to believe that the moral viciousness of a Hitler falls outside the range of "normality" and that people who do these actions are indeed mentally insane. Unfortunately, this comfort is not given to us, not in the case of most Nazi perpetrators (as we have seen previously and shall see in the next chapter) nor in the specific case of Hitler's person. Mad ideas are unfortunately part of the normal world. In other words, to have mad ideas does not necessarily imply psychiatric madness of the person.

Any number of diagnoses have been proposed to explain Hitler's behavior. Paying careful attention to biographical details, the psychiatrist Fritz Redlich (1998) has recently attempted to arrive at a definite diagnosis. Redlich ruled out any of the conventional psychiatric labels and preferred to describe Hitler's personality as "narcissistic," that is, developmentally immature and self-centered.. He confirmed what has often been mentioned, that Hitler was preoccupied with fears about his own health and quite generally was deeply concerned about purity of blood and the health of the human mind.. Redlich is convinced that these fears played a leading role in his personality and later led to the infamous euthanasia program in which ten thousands of German mentally and physically affected patients were killed.

However, Redlich agrees that the most pathological instance in Hitler's mind was on the subject of Jews. Redlich considers Hitler as having paranoid delusions and fears of Jews as a mortal threat to himself and the whole of humanity. That does not mean (as I implied earlier) that Hitler was mad in the form of a paranoid schizophrenic. Rather, rationalizing himself into the role of a physician to the ailing German body politic, Hitler likened Jews to medical carriers of disease and from that premise drew logically consequent conclusions. This "insight" on the part of Hitler's paranoid mentality seems to me to be the true psychological origin of the Final Solution.

Two concluding remarks on antisemitism as the origin of the Holocaust seem pertinent. Whereas for Hitler himself antisemitism was at the very core of his mentality, the same cannot be said for the masses of German antisemitic Nazis or even for most perpetrators. It is probably true that there were some Germans who had similar paranoid ideas about Jews. But it is entirely unreal to assume that the vast majority of antisemitic Germans felt as intensively about Jews as did Hitler. We shall elaborate on this point in the next chapter on the mentality of perpetrators. Rather, referring again to the leader-follower relationship outlined above, note that *following* paranoid instructions is not the same as *having* these paranoid ideas. Thus when we think of antisemitism as the source of the Holocaust we need to bear these distinctions in mind and not generalize Hitler's personal form of antisemitism, peculiar to his destructive personality, to all forms of antisemitism in general.

Another comment concerns the curious observation that many personality symptoms were present in Hitler's early life but not the delusional antisemitism that the psychiatrist Redlich considered basic to Hitler's entire mentality. Before age 30, during his stay in Vienna and during the four years of war, there is no indication whatever that Hitler was an extreme anti-Semite. This would confirm the notion that, as Redlich suggests, he was not suffering from a basic personality disorder or mental illness as these would usually show before a person's early twenties. Indeed, Hitler was on good terms with his family's Jewish doctor and had several Jewish associates and acquaintances. In particular, Jews were prominent among those who helped him in his down-and-out years in Vienna (Kershaw, 1999). – There is general consensus that Hitler's own 1924 account of being shocked into violent antisemitism by the unsightly presence of pre-war Vienna's Jews is pure fiction.– It remains therefore that Germany 1919 was the decisive place and moment when personal, cultural and historical factors converged in the person of Hitler. From that time on, the delusions of extreme and ultimately murderous antisemitism fueled his political career and propelled him unto the political stage of Europe to become, as history will remember him: the person of destruction.

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11. On the Psychodynamics of Nazi Destruction

Overview: What kind of persons were those who actually perpetrated the officially sanctioned tortures and murders? A psychoanalyst suggests that it was the outside context of the Nazi ideology that systematically "triggered" in the relatively "normal" mind of Nazi killers an insecurely repressed inner core of murderous hate.

Eichmann was the head of the Nazi SS office in Berlin that was responsible for what was at one time called Jewish emigration. The word *emigration* was somewhat of a misnomer, as were so many other Nazi phrases coined for the purpose of deception and conscience saving. In reality it was a brutally enforced process. A more truthful name would have been office for the expulsion of the Jews.

With the annexation of Austria in March 1938, there were close to a million Jews living in Germany. At that time the active Nazi persecution of the Jews started in earnest. With ever more restricting laws and ordinances and -- encouraged by the party -- arbitrary destructive actions of hooligans, the about 200,000 Jews of Vienna clearly got the message that if you want to live a bearable life you must get out.

Consider what leaving one's home, family and friends, livelihood and language entailed. Unlike Americans today who quite frequently move in their jobs and residence, most Europeans in the 1930s would have lived in the same place for many years and even generations. Yet in hindsight and in comparison with the horror of the mass killing that was to come, the forced emigration and expropriation of German and Austrian Jews seems almost a tolerable burden.

Kissing his two grandsons good-bye, my grandfather gave each of us a gold watch and said: "Don't worry, nothing will happen to me, I was an officer in the Austrian army." As a small child he had come to Vienna from the Czech province of Moravia. At his age of over 60 he could not imagine starting a new life abroad, even if there had been such an opportunity. He died February 9, 1943 in the concentration camp Theresienstadt.

Nevertheless, tens of thousands did manage to leave Vienna by getting to another country, legally or illegally. At that time, the biggest hurdle was not just getting out of Germany, it was finding another country to let you in. Hitler's aim was to make the country *judenrein* (free of Jews) and Vienna was the place where Eichmann could first show his bureaucratic skill. He organized the forced emigration by making it more systematic, total, and speedy. In this work he engaged the active participation of the Jewish community and streamlined the expropriation and the issuing of passports. In addition, he pressured Jews by various means, such as sending them to concentration camps from where they could be released on condition they would "voluntarily" leave Germany within a stipulated period.

The Banality of Evil

Ominously, In March 1941 the name of Eichmann's office was changed from "Office of

Jewish Emigration" to "Office of Jewish Evacuation." Due to war conditions, emigration was by that time no longer feasible. In customary Nazi deception, *evacuation* or *resettlement East* meant at first the transportation to ghettos in the East where Jews died in the hundreds of thousands due to starvation, illness, and maltreatment. Within a year, the "Final Solution" had taken on the form of poison gas in the death camps of Poland. Throughout the war Eichmann's office continued its work of collecting and transporting on schedule millions of Jews to their slaughter.. Eichmann went out of his way to press the government of the various countries to deliver their Jews to him. Most notably, he personally supervised the transportation of about 450,000 Jews of Hungary to their death only just in time before the advancing Soviet army rid the country of the Nazis and their destructive deeds.

Nevertheless, preoccupied as he was about the matter of transportation and schedules, words or thoughts such as *killing* or *death* were never on Eichmann's mind or in his conversation. As he defended himself in the trial at Jerusalem in 1961, he was merely a loyal worker doing the job of arranging transportation which he was ordered to do. He felt good about it and denied vigorously any guilt and clear knowledge of killing a single Jew. As far as he was concerned, he was merely doing the same job which he had first done so well in Vienna, the job of "facilitating" the "emigration " of Jews out of Germany.

Together with thousands of other Nazi criminals, Eichmann escaped with the help of sympathizers of which there were many, including some church leaders.. Like the defenders in the courts, they rationalized the German mass murders as just being part of normal war making and compared them as similar to such deeds as the Allied fire bombing of Hamburg and Dresden or the war crimes perpetrated by the Soviet forces. For almost fifteen years, Eichmann lived and worked in Buenos Aires quite openly amid other German immigrants without denying his Nazi past. Justifiably fearing that Argentina would not extradite or prosecute Eichmann, the Israeli Secret Service illegally captured him in May 1960 and whisked him to Israel. He was brought to trial the following year. Finally, in May 1962 he was executed after the Court of Appeals elaborated on the original capital judgment, stating that: "the Final Solution would never have assumed the infernal forms of the flayed skin and tortured flesh of millions of Jews without the fanatical zeal and the unquenchable blood thirst of the appellant and his accomplices" (A. p. 249). His last written words were: "Obedience is my guilt."

What should give us pause is the following: If you had met Eichmann during his years in Buenos Aires you would have encountered one of many thousands of German immigrants who with his wife and two children lived an unremarkable life. He may even have told you on occasion that he used to work in the SS Office for Jewish Resettlement. Nothing big, you would think, just one of those jobs in the Nazi bureaucracy. What is even more, his outward appearance and his daily talk and actions seemed entirely ordinary. No conceivable medical or psychological tests, nor any psychiatric exploration or analysis would have noticed anything unusual or extraordinary. Certainly nothing in his character would have suggested that this

person, as the Jerusalem court pointed out, single-handedly brought about the murder of millions of Jews who without his excessive zeal would not have been transported or could have been saved by the approaching Allies.

Apparently then, the murderous evil that this person perpetrated did not have its effective source in his own unremarkable personality. Rather, the source of the evil that Eichmann perpetrated was the social-historical context. He, like million others, lacked the moral character to recognize, much less to oppose, the social evil that was inherent in Nazism.. This is probably what Arendt(1963) meant by her often quoted phrase, "the banality of evil." Is there a moral lesson to be learned from the psychology of an Eichmann? Most obviously a deep social evil, just as it is not merely the result of an individual evil psychology, cannot be set right or avoided by a psychological conversion. Arendt's phrase implies that in a really evil society, as was the Nazis', evil can flourish amid the banality of ordinary moral human beings. We want to keep this example in mind when in the next two chapters we reflect on the "ordinariness" of the "extraordinary" moral characters who could withstand the all-pervasive social evil of Nazism.

Eichmann, as thousands of others in the Nazi hierarchy, was then not a violent, impulsive murderer. He was probably unable to personally take pleasure in killing or perpetrating the sadistic acts of the Holocaust which nevertheless he coordinated from his desk. Similarly Himmler, Eichmann's boss, was reported to have nearly fainted when witnessing the shooting of some hundred Jews. Yet he made many speeches praising members of the "murder" branch of the SS for remaining "decent fellows" amid deeds that, he admitted, cannot be spoken about openly. He continued to boast about these deeds, which could disturb an ordinary conscience and therefore should be kept unarticulated, that is, not just secret to others, but to themselves: "they should be noted to Germany's everlasting glory."

Nazi Murderers: Five Characteristics

Different from the "armchair murderers," such as Eichmann, were the many "real" murderers in the Nazi scheme of things. This is the major content of the present chapter, where we continue what we discussed earlier about murder in the death camps (Chapter 5) and murder by order of the government (Chapter 7). The two dispositions that make these horrible crimes psychologically possible, sadistic pleasure and morally blind enthusiasm, were widely present in Nazism, even as Nazism, as was said repeatedly before, is inconceivable without these two human characteristics.

A forensic psychiatrist, H. V. Dicks (1972), was given the opportunity to explore in depth the personality of eight such Nazi criminals, imprisoned in Germany. The court had incontrovertible evidence of unspeakable crimes these men had committed, such as trampling victims to death, choking, suffocating or painfully poisoning them, throwing them into cess pits, inserting turned-on fire hoses into their mouth, raping and torturing women, or smashing babies to death in front of their mothers. Now in prison, they all denied personal

responsibility, referred to Jews as inhuman vermin that had to be exterminated, and blamed others, frequently their superiors, for these deeds. Basically they considered themselves victims of the system, and this both with reference to the murderous Nazi past and to the contemporary Germany where they had to stand trial. While Dicks had no problem diagnosing an unconscious core of murderous rage in each of these men, he believed that in a more humane environment none would have done overtly murderous acts. This is a result that should astonish us. It certainly astonished the psychiatrist.

Since Dicks found no essential differences in the personality structure of these eight SS murderers it suffices to present his own summary regarding the personality of one of these men. In it he touches on five interacting characteristics. He writes: "B. S. was one of those 'ordinary' inconspicuous men who bear out Hannah Arendt's dictum about 'the banality of evil'. This average man could have lived out his life in quieter days unnoticed, a respectable craftsman and probably harming nobody. But for the times in which he lived, and the way his weakness made him respond to the blandishments of group power and of his own self-aggrandizement, his regression to living out his insecurely repressed hate would most likely have been confined to petty occasions. He seemed, at any rate, to have readily mastered his sadism when the sanctions for it fell away, and returned to his deferential, bland facade" (D. p. 141).

Note that in the psychiatrist's opinion at first three social-psychological factors came together to shape the personality of a Nazi criminal. They were: 1/ a murderous core of insecurely repressed hate within the criminal's personality, 2/ a social system outside the person that orders and encourages the acting out of this core, and 3/ a moral weakness in the person to fall for group power and self-aggrandizement. In consequence of these three factors, 4/ the Nazi murderer "regresses" to the infantile murderous core and 5/ obeys the social call for the "paranoid" murder of dehumanized scapegoats ("killing enemies is not murder"). In another summary, Dicks (p. 265) explicitly refers to this fifth factor as the social tragedy of obedience and of the human tendency to dehumanize and demonize potential victims.

If all this psychological terminology sounds complex and obscure, please bear in mind that it merely reflects the devious human psychology of deception and destruction that nourished Nazism in the first place. I shall try to elucidate point by point.

1/ An insecurely repressed murderous core: As a quite general description of a mature human personality, psychoanalysis would claim that it includes a securely repressed -- and therefore unconscious -- mental core of murder and hate. In some people, however, it may be insecurely repressed and thus liable to erupt more readily into some form of violence or aggression. Nevertheless, by itself this core does not make a person violent or a murderer. It is part of the inner life of feelings and fantasy. To the question about the origin of a person's inner life psychoanalysis points to a child's slow development from infancy to adulthood.

The desires and the emotions of infants are strong and totalizing. An object they want is an object they love intensely, even as an object they reject is an object they hate intensely --

where the object is primarily personal relations between infant and caregivers. Insofar as love and hate are directed to the same person, there is ample opportunity for ambivalence, emotional conflict, and frustration. Infants in their immaturity may thus develop two types of emotional responses that one day may lead to mental problems: on the one hand, paranoid feelings of abandonment and insecurity, on the other hand, depressive feelings of not living up to an imaginary standard of being fully engaged.

These feelings are normal developmental phases that leave their emotional residue in the developing fantasy life of the growing children. Around age seven, as already mentioned in Chapter 1, the original emotions/thoughts are repressed from consciousness. This repression apparently serves two functions: one, to conserve the vitality of these first emotions as an emotional reservoir on which later life can draw and two, to protect this reservoir from the onslaught of conscious manipulation. This is the process Freud called "primary repression." In healthy development, repression brings about the desirable state of overcoming the psychological conflicts, ambivalences and frustrations that are normal byproducts of young children's mental life. However, when this process is not worked out satisfactorily, we can have what the Freudian psychiatrist Dicks calls "a core of paranoid hate insecurely repressed." And this is precisely what he observed in the Nazi murderers.

2/ The Pull of the Social system: As said earlier, by itself this core would not lead to overt murder. This is one of the author's most important conclusion. It requires a trigger situation for the core to erupt into real murder. And the worst that can be said about the Nazi system is precisely that it bears responsibility for providing that trigger situation. Hitler's regime openly glorified war and murder in a way unmatched by other regimes that may also be called murderous (Chapter 6). These other murderous regimes had at least some conceivably positive parts to their credit – even when, as in Communism, they were no more than visionary schemes fired by moral postulates. Without these they could not have lasted as long as they did.

Specifically with regard to the Nazi ideology, killing was presented as a desirable action of cleansing a nations racial purity and it became pleasure for its own sake. As we showed in Chapter 5, Himmler organized a network of training centers near concentration camps where prospective Nazi murderers literally were habituated in being cruel and avoiding the least signs of human pity. Part of this training was observation of torture and murder. The trainees were given to understand that they were the guardians of the new "thousand-year" society. They were to be the cream of the crop. Utter loyalty and blind obedience was expected of them.

3/ Moral Weakness: This societal pull proved attractive, indeed irresistible, for morally weak persons. In this particular case, Dicks identifies moral weakness as the symptom for an insecurely repressed core of hate. The persons "regressed" to the state of acting out the child fantasies of paranoia and omnipotence. In an equally childish manner they succumbed to peer pressure and enthusiastically attached themselves to the leader. Through him they could experience themselves as all-powerful and free of personal responsibility. Having felt insecure

before, they now reveled in the secure feeling of belonging to an elite group. Dicks also points out the historically peculiar German constellation of the authoritarian, patriarchal family system. He suggests that this authority model contributed directly to these men's lack of feelings for the victims and their love and enthusiasm for Hitler as their leader.

The need for an "ideal" leader had much to do with the strongly ambivalent feelings the men interviewed had toward their "real" father. As a fantasy model, the son loves the father's imagined power and manliness. Yet in reality, during and after the war and the subsequent social upheavals, the father is experienced as weak and absent and as economically and politically powerless. This weakness becomes an object of hate. The son, however, would not dare to admit feelings of disdain and hate toward his father. At the same time, he cannot satisfactorily work out these childish feelings of hate. That is the meaning of Dick's phrase "insecurely repressed:" The son ambivalently identifies with the father but represses from consciousness the negative feelings of hate invested in the father image.

4/ Regression and Projection: A "core of murderous hate" is "insecurely repressed" in the inner mental landscape of the men, it is dormant – until the time when the Nazi system beckons them to express those feelings openly. The men can now act out the repressed hate, indirectly by attaching themselves to a *substitute* father figure and directly by turning to socially approved scapegoats. This is what psychoanalysis calls the mechanism of *paranoid splitting*. The hate within the men's repressed mental life is split off from the "us" and projected onto the "others" who are seen as hateful and persecuting enemies. In this manner the men can feel wondrously relieved from an inner burden while the "others" can be dehumanized, maltreated, and murdered with the same blind obedience and enthusiasm with which the men are attached to Hitler as their leader and substitute father figure.

5/ Blind Obedience: In the last chapter and the postscript, the psychoanalyst Dicks attempted to respond summarily to various questions of how the murderous deeds of the Holocaust were psychologically possible. As we have seen, he rejected the notion he had originally entertained that the active perpetrators were clinically insane, that they were uncontrollable psychopaths. Rather he found that those like Eichmann who survived the war and managed to avoid being arrested, lived relatively ordinary, inconspicuous lives -- even as before joining the SS they did not stand out as overly violent or aggressive people.

Dicks also rejected the notion that deep-seated personal antisemitism could be an adequate psychological explanation for the atrocities perpetrated on Jews. In fact, he found that none of the interviewed Nazi criminals had shown special animosity against Jews. During the time before World War II when the men were being trained for duty in concentration camps, the camp authorities did not even have a category for Jews. That was added in late 1938. At that time Hitler was impatient with the exodus of Jews so far and initiated the *Kristallnacht* (Crystal Night), the organized destruction of synagogues and Jewish businesses and intensified persecution of Jews. Dicks (p. 108) was taken aback how matter-of-factly one of the men

expressed it: "Right -- from tomorrow we have a new class of enemy -- the Jew: the regulations say so." "From now on we knew that soon the orders of destruction would come, as the SS command began systematically to prepare concentration camp staffs for it" (Dicks, p. 102).

The evidence of the interviews led Dicks (p. 234) to focus on the inner psychodynamics as "*predisposition* to feel drawn to the 'lure' of murderous acting-out by inner pressure." But ultimately he pointed to the outside Nazi context that allowed "ordinary" repressed aggression to pass into overt cruelty and ruthless killing. In points 1 through 4 I have elucidated the author's interactive approach. While admitting an inner core of murderousness in a relatively "normal" personality, the psychoanalyst recognized the interaction with the murderous ideology of Nazism as decisive. If any insanity was at work in the Holocaust perpetrators it was not as a personal illness but as a paranoid ideology and a projected fanaticism. These two factors made people blind to the destructive and ultimately self-destructive direction of the Nazi state.

In this sense, Dicks speaks in point 5 of the social *tragedy of obedience* and our human capacity for fabricating enemies by *demonization* or *dehumanization*. Insofar as they did not deny their misdeeds outright, these were the twin excuses or rationalizations the Nazi murderers used: "We were obedient to legitimate authority and defended our country against dangerous enemies." They said this both in the public courts and within themselves. It pays to remind ourselves that neither ideological fanaticism nor antisemitism were much in evidence in the psychological make-up of these murderers. Obedience and dehumanization seem to be all that was required to turn relatively "normal" people into murderous monsters.

At the end of his report the author referred to Milgram's study on obedience that we summarized in Chapter 1. There we saw that even without the fanaticism of a murderous ideology, Milgram's volunteers were quite capable of obeying what they considered legitimate authority -- no matter how flimsily constructed -- and inflicting harm, indeed potentially lethal harm, on innocent people. Blind obedience apparently prevailed here over recognition of the humanity of the other. With this attitude the volunteers effectively dehumanized the other.

I suggested there that Milgram's astonishing findings do not make sense unless we can postulate the operation of an inner pleasure in doing harm, something that is not far from this chapter's notion of an inner murderous core. This psychological explanation seems even more compelling in connection with the Stanford Prison Study, also summarized in Chapter 1. This study created a mock prison, randomly assigning some students as "guards" and others as "prisoners". The cruelty of the "guards" to the "prisoners" was so severe that the study, originally planned for a week, had to be curtailed by the second day. In this case the cruelty cannot even be ascribed to blind obedience to an external authority. How then can we explain the cruel behavior of the "guards" and the "prisoners"? -- Remember, the "prisoners" too, passively cooperated with the role playing; they could at any time have walked away from the

cruel treatment but did not. – Apparently they interpreted the role assigned to them as a license to act out what in line with the psychoanalyst Dicks we can call “an inner core of pleasure in destruction”. For the volunteers in the Milgram and the Stanford Study, as for the Nazi criminals, the social configuration was the sufficient context to trigger the acting out of destructive tendencies that are normally – absent the context – repressed.

We begun the story of the Holocaust with reflecting on our psychological capacity for self-deception and destruction. The Nazi murderers discussed in this chapter have provided evidence for acting out this deadly psychological combination. Their minds were besotted with hateful lies and illusions and they projected these into reality with horrendous consequences for victims and bystanders. But this is not the whole story. At the time, there were many resisters and rescuers. And today, we can still take a stand against deception and destruction that could conceivably threaten the entire existence of human life. These two issues also belong to the story of the Holocaust and shall bring our the story to a more constructive and hope-filled close.

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12. On Rescuers and Resisters amid Nazi Destruction

Overview: The Holocaust also became the occasion of thousands of actions of heroic goodness, told and untold. Where governments and established institutions -- with few exception -- "abandoned the Jews to their fate" -- ordinary individuals risked their lives when occasions arose to rescue Jews. The relatively small proportions of Jews saved is much less due to the absence of people willing to help than to the deliberate Nazi strategy of secrecy and deception in pursuing their goal of Jewish destruction.

So far we have surveyed the Nazi situation as it culminated in wars of destruction and in the slaughter of whole populations. I have attempted to see the most unspeakable deeds for what they were and give them the right name. At the same time I tried to recognize in the Nazi deeds something that we humans have done. Ultimately, it was our human psychology and our European-Western culture, as it shaped the life of this historical period, that is responsible for what happened. In Chapters 8 and 9 we have talked of the worst perpetrators as well as of the less responsible bystanders. In earlier chapter we also discussed some aspects of the psychology of the victims, using the voice of Holocaust survivors. There is, however, another group that deserves our intense psychological scrutiny. For they could be a model of how *we* should respond if ever a similar situation should touch our own lives. I am referring to the heroes of the Nazi period, the hundreds of thousands who took a stand against the Nazi policies and did this often with great risk for their own lives.

And as I encouraged you in earlier chapters to see yourself in the person even of the Nazi perpetrators, to empathize (not: to sympathize) with them and thereby grow in your grasp of their evil psychology, here too I want you to recognize the ordinariness of those who took a stand against the Nazis. These were not extraordinary people, geniuses endowed with special gifts of courage and selflessness, quite different from us. The proof for this assertion, in addition to their own testimony, is simply the number of helpers, rescuers and active resisters. It is estimated that over eight million Jews were at one time or another under Nazi domination. Of these about six million perished, while about a million escaped and another million survived. When you find that many survivors and a corresponding number of active rescuers you know you are dealing with ordinary people.

Consider that for every Jewish family rescued from the clutches of the Nazi death machine you could easily have ten people who contributed and helped in a particular case. And here I do not even think of whole populations of millions in occupied or allied nations that simply did not cooperate with the Nazi policy of Jewish deportation, countries like Denmark, Bulgaria, and Italy or Hungary until 1943. Even if I limit my count to countries where the

Nazis were in complete control, where people hiding Jews faced the gravest dangers and informers were paid handsomely, the number of rescued Jews is still remarkable. Take the 8,000 Jews who in May 1943 escaped the liquidation of Warsaw's ghetto – not without an armed revolt and bloody struggles for weeks that cost the Germans many lives. They together with another about 7,000 Jews were in hiding in wartime Warsaw for over two years. Certainly, 15,000 is a pitifully small number compared to the about 350,000 Jews who were murdered there (Y. pp. 380, 446). But think also of the hundreds of thousands of Polish persons who risked their lives in befriending Jews. (See Chapter 8 on the number of rescuers.)

Rescuers of Jewish Life

There was Josephek, a cattle dealer, hanged in a public square in Lwow for concealing 35 Jews; his body and the Jews' bodies were left dangling for a number of days as a warning to others (F. p. 18). Even in a region where the most vicious crimes of the Nazis were perpetrated there was then a remarkable number of ordinary good people, individuals and institutions (such as monasteries), who offered help -- *when help was socially possible*. That is the point. As individuals, we act within a given society and at a given historical moment. To stand up against the Nazis effectively depended very much on the specific social situation. It is not fair or reasonable simply to look at the percentages of Jews rescued and infer from it the degree of hostility against Jews.

Denmark is often singled out because in the matter of Jews its government flatly refused to give in to German pressure. When finally the Germans forced the issue and prepared for the deportation of the less than 8,000 Jews living there, all of them were rescued by helping them flee stealthily in small boats to nearby Sweden (R. p.86). Even here, the success of the rescue partly depended on the fortuitous fact that a high German official forewarned some key persons of the imminent threat to the Jews (R. p. 131).

In contrast, Netherlands is a country with a long tradition of tolerance for Jews. With a large Jewish population there was no neutral country at the border where Jews could flee (Y. p. .438). Moreover, again in contrast to Denmark, the government was entirely in German hands. Step by step, as in Germany before, Jews were deprived of all rights until at last they were hoarded into ghettos and the deportation to the death camps in the East begun. About 110,000 were deported. This is a terribly large number. Nevertheless, some 40,000 were in hiding, among them Anna Frank's family. When you think of the hundreds of thousands of people who must have cooperated in this dangerous rescue efforts, the number of 40,000 is impressive. Unfortunately, more than half of those in hiding were eventually discovered and perished, as did the Frank family. Informers eager for material rewards were a constant problem. To counteract the danger of informers, the hiding of Jews was something one did not openly talk about. Even where an entire community was implicated as was the case in the small

Dutch village of Nieuwlande (near Hoogeveen) where every household hid a Jewish family that community became known as "the village that was silent" (R. p.130).

The Protestant pastor Trocmé and his wife in the village of Le-Chambon-sur-Lignon in southern France spontaneously began to organize this region of small farmers with the aim of giving shelter to persecuted Jews. In the words of the wife (C. p. 102), "we started in 1940 to disobey through small day-by-day actions in very little ways." This "nest of Jews in Huguenot country" was under a German commander, Major Schmaling, who encouraged his forces to look the other way: He was no hero, no declared enemy of Nazism. Yet, "he protected hundreds, perhaps thousands" (C. p. 109). For different ethical reasons and without much open discussion or deliberation, both the French people of the village and the German Major did what came naturally to them. In a given social situation they – in contrast to others who let themselves be deceived and used in the slaughter of Jews – followed their own conscience. They interpreted what they saw and quietly disobeyed the evil designs of their respective governments.

Along these lines, what impressed one French survivor most, was the independent, autonomous thinking of Madame Marie, a concierge in Paris: "One of the things that saved me and my family was the fact that in thought and action... she broke rules, yet she was a genius at humanity... I think that good people, simple people are much more complicated [i.e., less stereotypical] than evil people... because they were not so literate or formally educated, they had to do their own thinking at all times. They didn't follow what was taught them; they figured out everything for themselves... people like her do more of their own thinking and make their own decisions because they are more outside that part of society that molds everyone the same way" (R. p.22). We rightly feel shame that France and other governments collaborated with the Nazi policies of Jewish deportation and destruction. But that should not make us forget that over two thirds of the 350,000 Jews in France were saved or that half of the 1,800 Jews in Norway were brought to safety in Sweden "under the most unbelievable difficulties" (C. p. 82). A French historian describes the situation in Western Europe: "Veritable factories for the manufacture of false identification papers operated in the larger cities. Hiding Jews became a subsidiary activity of the Resistance movements. Across the Alps and the Pyrenees, along the hazardous routes, Dutch, Belgian, and French Jews were convoyed by the thousands to Switzerland or to Spain" (F. p. 47).

Willem, a "simple man" when asked why he took the risks in his effort to save 27 Dutch Jews, responded in a straight forward way: "What do you mean, why did I do it? I let nobody step on my toes. And I don't let anybody step on anybody else's toes. I have no philosophy. I don't belong to a church. But when I see injustice done, I do something about it" (R. p. 34). Again and again, the ordinariness, recuers mention the naturalness of helping on an

individual level.

Oskar Schindler's story is now well known from the film that narrates his rescue of Jews working under him in Auschwitz as slave laborers. Schindler certainly was no saint as shown by his life before and after the Nazi period. Initially, he set out merely to exploit the war situation to further his own business interests. But "the cunning of history" got hold of him under quite extraordinary circumstances of evil. His revulsion at observing the slaughter of Jews turned him gradually into an extraordinary hero for doing good. To be on "Schindler's list" was for the almost 1,000 Jews the pledge of being in the book of life.

A similar story is told about the German Hermann Graebe. After witnessing a massacre of Jews, he said to himself: "Something has to be done. And how do you see such a thing without being stirred into action against this? ... My boy, nine years old, one day he might ask me: 'Dad, what did *you* do?' And that struck me." As a construction engineer on projects for the railroad, Graebe was able to save the lives of over 300 Jews. Note how Graebe connected the memory of his own childhood with a future encounter with his own son. "I cannot explain exactly why or how I did these things, but I believe that my mother's influence on me when I was a child has a lot to do with it. My mother was a simple, uneducated person who came from a peasant family... She told me, when I was ten or twelve years old, that I should not take advantage of other people's vulnerability." He recalls how as boy he tried to justify his mistreating of an elderly Jewish woman by pointing to others, when his mother replied firmly: "You are not the others... Would you like to be in her shoes? ... Take people as they come -- not by profession, not by religion, but by what they are as persons." And the Graebe, the "educated" German concluded these remarks with: "All this from a simple, uneducated women" (R. p. 43).

Hungary is a particularly tragic case where some people think something could have been done to avoid -- or at least greatly reduce -- the slaughter of Hungarian Jews. For until early 1944 the Hungarian government had consistently resisted the Nazi demand for transportation of their about 750.000 Jews. But now a new Germany-imposed government lost its nerve and started to cooperate with the Nazi death machine. Starting May 1944, within two months nearly half a million Jews were deported to the death camps. Until the last possible moment, the ovens of Auschwitz kept burning at maximum capacity (Y. p. 519). As I said earlier, it is hard to think of a situation that better illustrates the Nazi philosophy of death and destruction for its own sake. With the Russian forces coming ever closer and military defeat inexorable, the German death machine kept going and obviously interfered with Germany's desperate war efforts. By the end of 1944 the whole of Hungary and the Polish regions with the death camps were in Soviet hands.

The desperate situation of the Hungarian Jews had become widely known. Diplomatic

interventions were contemplated and urgent appeals were made to the Allied commands to bomb Auschwitz and destroy at least that institution of death and thus possibly save hundred thousands of lives. – And at the same time killing thousands of Jewish inmates: What an impossible dilemma! – In this connection, it is known that some clandestine diplomatic attempts were initiated, from both sides, to rescue Jews under the despicable aspect of "humans for sale."

As to the Hungarian population, official deception and the speed of deportation made it impossible to organize any meaningful rescue. Hungarian units at this late stage showed exceptional sadistic violence in following the orders of deportation. Needless to add that here too, as in other countries, pleasure in destruction and looting of property (Jews had been a substantial part of the Hungarian economy) were an additional motivating force. In the midst of this final killing spree, a Swedish diplomat, Raoul Wallenberg, came to Budapest in July 1944 with the express purpose of saving Jewish lives. With the consent of his government he issued bogus passports and identity papers. He went out of his way to distribute them as widely as possible, even setting up buildings where his "subjects" would be safely sheltered. One day he was seen driving along a column of marching deportees urging them to step out of line to be under his diplomatic protection. It says something about the desperate psychological state of the victims that only a small number of people availed themselves of this last attempt of rescue. Perhaps to save face in the international arena, the hostile authorities accepted the diplomat's claims. An astounding number of about 30,000 Jews were thus rescued by Raoul Wallenberg. This hero of Jewish lives was last seen January 17, 1945 when he left his office in Budapest to pay a visit to the newly installed Russian command. Apparently he too became a victim of Stalin's paranoia.

The Context of Jewish Rescue

It is obvious that the rescue of persecuted Jews is a different thing from resistance fighting against the German invaders. In many countries occupied by the Nazis both activities took place at the same time but without any intentional coordination as this would hardly have been possible. At best, rescue of Jews was a subsidiary task of the resistance movement. To defend or fight against an occupying enemy is as old as war. We do not consider this as belonging to the moral sphere. However, with the Nazi slaughter of the Jews, we feel rightly that taking a stand against it was a *moral* obligation. And this is how the rescuers themselves felt. Objectively, these rescuers took a heroically moral stand and in the course of rescue often risked their lives. In some cases their good deeds are officially recognized by the state of Israel. Yet the survivor Elie Wiesel, asks plaintively, "Why were there so few? Why did well-educated liberals and humanists *choose* to remain insensitive to the plight, the murder? Why did French police collaborate with Eichmann's emissaries in 1942?" Wiesel grasps well the essence of the moral situation: "In those days one climbed to the summit of humanity

simply by remaining human" (R. p.124-5). For hundred of thousands individuals, rescue of innocent Jewish lives did indeed become the social occasion for climbing to "to the summit of humanity." Unfortunately, as I said earlier, the overwhelming reason why six million Jews perished is not primarily a lack of individual rescuers but a lack of social occasions for rescue.

Consider that before the war had started, close to a million Jews could have been rescued if they had any place to emigrate. At that time, Hitler was content with expelling and expropriating the Jews. But where could they go? While some countries did allow the immigration of some selected refugees, no country, no people -- and that means you and me -- were prepared to welcome hundreds of thousands of Jewish refugees. It was not hatred of Jews but ordinary USA politics when Roosevelt in early 1939 would not let the German liner *St. Louis* full of desperate Jewish refugees enter the country and sent them back, presumably to Hitler's concentration camps. [To avoid this, the captain purposely beached the ship on the shores of England.]

Note the moral paradox: Because of the evil of one the rest of the world is made to feel guilty, even as the evil provides occasions for moral heroism! However, to say as it has become customary, that governments *abandoned* the Jews is a presentist perspective: The world was different then. Today -- precisely because of the Nazi crimes -- a country *may* feel obliged to offer refuge on a massive scale. But in 1938 no country felt responsible for what was happening elsewhere in another country. Similarly, in the Hungary of 1944 there were no social occasions for the individual rescue of Jews -- had it not been for the improbable chutzpa that only a diplomat of a neutral country could show. Once the war in the East had started, there was no way that, short of military victory, international intervention could have made a big difference.

To be realistic, we must recognize that the moral heroism of individuals like Wallenberg, Schindler, or Tokmé made a difference for thousands of individuals. But at the same time, once Hitler was in power and unleashed his war of destruction, no amount of individual heroic deeds could have averted the Holocaust. These considerations loom large in the discussions of the next chapter, on how to respond today to the Holocaust.

Resistance to Nazism

You may ask: Was there no resistance to the Nazi regime within Germany? There was; after all, in national elections the Nazi party had never received much more than a third of the votes. However, you realize of course that once the Nazis were in power organized action was not possible. Here was a government of terror and murder that eradicated any opposition, with no legal constraint. Within a few years of the dictatorship, many people who had originally voted for Hitler could exclaim with Dr. Schacht, retiring in 1937 as minister of economics: "We have fallen into the hands of criminals. How could I foresee that?" (B. p.

3). Two years later Hitler had unleashed the war of destruction in the Slavic East, undoubtedly his biggest crime, leading to the death of tens of millions -- within which the Jewish Holocaust stands out as a most evil deed. Now resistance would have the additional connotation of treason during a time of war and a "stab in the back" (the myth of World War I that helped the Nazis come to power).

As we learned in Chapter 9, an estimate of the political attitude of Germans during the war shows: 11% hard core Nazi supporters, 25% followers with reservation, 40% non-political, 15% inactive dissenters, 9% hostile activists (B. p.56). Thus one quarter of the population would be considered anti-Nazi, but less than half of these were active resisters. Resistance was confined to small circles of people who could trust each other. The anti-Nazi activities included helping Nazi victims, critical comments on academic or religious occasions (such as Dietrich Bonhoeffer's Confessing Church), reception and distribution of foreign news sources, etc. The "White Rose" is the name of a group of students who in 1942 began to distribute anti-Nazi leaflets; they were caught within a year. Their message was remarkable in that it singled out the moral depravity of inhuman crimes, including the murder of "three hundred thousand Jews in a most bestial way" (B. p. 235).

With Hitler in power, there was for Germans only one way to get rid of the Nazi regime and avoid the destructions of war: that was Hitler's assassination. For that purpose, a lone cabinet maker, G. Elser, prepared a bomb in November 1939. It went off just thirteen minutes after Hitler had unexpectedly early left the place of a yearly party get-together. Notably, several serious but finally unsuccessful attempts on Hitler's life were part of what seemed to be an on-going military conspiracy. In Chapter 10 we referred to some early attempts to stop Hitler in 1938 and 1939. Toward the end of the war, in July 1944, a bomb exploded at Hitler's headquarters, when his momentary stepping to the side and the massive oak table saved his life. In brutal vengeance, over 200 generals and thousands of other real or suspected conspirators and family members were implicated and executed.

Finally, we can pay homage to a few conscientious resisters who gave their life as witness against the Nazi evil. I present here the extraordinary stand taken by a "simple" Austrian peasant, as told by Zahn (1986). Franz Jägerstätter was born in 1907 within a few miles of Hitler's Austrian birthplace. He was executed in August 1943 for refusing to be inducted into the army, with the required oath of unconditional obedience to Hitler. Jägerstätter was born into a typical peasant community, steeped into century-old customs and traditions of subsistence farming. Before he was thirty years old, when he married and took over the running of the family farm, he experienced a kind of religious conversion. He became known for two things: living a devout Christian life and showing principled opposition to Nazism. After March 1938, when Hitler annexed Austria, he continued speaking out against the Nazi evil. But in general,

he avoided getting involved in arguments and looked after his own business.

The end of the story is quickly told. After getting a deferral from war service for two years, in March 1943 he was called to report to the induction center. He reported but refused to participate in what he called "the unjust war of an evil regime." He had conscientiously prepared himself for that stand by taking spiritual counsel with the parish priest and others, including the bishop of his diocese. They all counseled him that his Christian duty was to fulfill the duty of his status of a father of a family, that he owed obedience to legitimate authority especially when it called upon him to serve in the army; and that he was in no position to judge the justness or the unjustness of the war.

He did not question these points in principle. He was not just a pacifist and had no great ambition to change the world. He merely affirmed that he "had been given the grace" to recognize evil and oppose it. Noncombatant service he turned down as an evasive compromise. He never even considered to be a draft evader even though the author of his biography knows for sure that the village would have protected "one of its own." Before the execution a piece of paper was left in his cell. To save his life he had only to put his signature on it. Instead he wrote: "I cannot and may not take an oath in favor of a government that is fighting an unjust war." This is, as far as I know, the only time that the Just War Theory has been invoked in order to declare a particular war unjust.

Not surprisingly, Jägerstätter's stand is hardly known in his own country or anywhere else (except perhaps in the USA during the stress of another "unjust" war in Vietnam). His stand offends those millions who are still alive and may not have been enthusiastic about the war but yet did "their duty" when called to fight. Of course, today it is easy to talk of the moral eclipse of the German elite and of the failure of the intellectual, professional and spiritual leaders to recognize the Nazi evil for what it was. However, in the beginning of the Nazi regime, as I tried to point out earlier, Hitler knew how to dissemble and deceive and with the pretended threat of a Bolshevik revolution things were far from black and white.

In his writings Jägerstätter asks a series of rhetorical questions: "Did Nazism simply fall down upon us out of a clear blue sky?" (Z. p. 217). Did "the Austrian clergy from the very beginning set themselves firmly in opposition, instead of actually praising the Party?" (p. 47). "In Germany, before Hitler came to power, it was once a matter of policy to refuse Holy Communion to Nazis. Have we then -- while for more than two years now a horrible slaughter has been going on -- established a new policy which sees all this as permissible?" (p. 113). He looks around and sees that many who initially supported Nazism "have come to realize that everything has turned out differently" (p. 218) but do not know how to get out of the morass.

Through faith and a deliberate conscience, this peasant took an unconditional stand against the evil he was given the grace (as he thought) to recognize. Moreover, Jägerstätter

referred to new "terrifying weapons... capable of smashing the entire world into ruins" (p. 232), even as this war that Germany started is not "a war pretty much like the others in which simple greed for territory played the major role; instead it is more of a revolution which has already brought almost the entire world into its grasp" (p. 119). Finally, he expressed amazement: "... but that we Catholics must make ourselves tools of the worst and most dangerous anti-Christian power that has ever existed is something I cannot and will not believe" (p. 127).

Clearly, this Austrian peasant is not a model that can be or should be imitated today. However, I want you to note how closely his stand follows the direction of this work. This moral hero thought falsity and deception an abomination and recognized Hitler's ideology as uniquely evil to the core (p. 79). He knew that Hitler's war was criminal and should never be considered a just war. He called the Nazi deeds what they were: "a horrible slaughter" and pointed out the pleasure we take in doing forbidden things: "Almost all of us are quite willing to glut ourselves on the spoils of thievery, but we want to saddle the responsibility for the whole dirty business on one person alone" (p. 224). It is remarkable that these points more or less cover the themes of Chapters 1 through 5.

We shall begin the next and final chapter by exploring what the various rescuers and resisters mentioned in this chapter may have in common. Can this provide a basis from which to form today a meaningful response to Auschwitz? My hope is that the story of the Holocaust is not merely a record of evil deeds of the past but becomes relevant for the perils of today.

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13. On Responding Today to the Nazi Destruction

Overview: If we are prepared to see the story of the Holocaust, not just as something that *others* have done, but as something that is part of *us*, part of *our* culture and *our* psychology, we can feel shame about Auschwitz and its underlying *social image of destruction*. We must admit that images of war and destruction have been an integral part of our cultural heritage for ages. We can thus see Auschwitz not as an incomprehensible aberration, but as a timely warning, even as the extinction of humankind has become a concrete possibility. We can examine the images of our society, together with our own personal images, for actions and directions tending toward possible human extinction and take an honest, principled stand against destruction.

We have started the story of the Holocaust by focusing on human psychology. In Chapter 1 I proposed a developmental view that describes infants not just as passive recipients and imitators of what is given, but as active and accountable co-constructors of their present peer society. This “child” society will eventually become the “real,” adult society. In this view, young children spontaneously construct social images; they show it most evidently in social pretend play. The development of these mental images is the *psychological basis* for what in adulthood will be the co-constructed societal images underlying each particular society.

Clearly, these early images relate more to children’s desires, fears and emotions and less to objective social reality and reason. Even though with advancing age the images become more “real” and logical, adult social images remain at their core what they were in early childhood: partly rational, partly irrational, partly real, partly pretense, partly pleasure, desire and fear.

This developmental perspective helps explain why all societies throughout history have shown features that can only be described as immature or unhealthy, to the point of self-destruction. I have earlier suggested that the human species could be defined as the animal that is capable of and takes pleasure in, deceiving and destroying not merely others but itself. Societies and cultures reflect these negative features. The story of the Holocaust has provided us with palpable instances where these features of deception and destruction were in evidence -- and unless we recognize these, the Holocaust would indeed be psychologically incomprehensible.

Now, if you are familiar with all the main “facts” about this story, the events that led to Hitler's rise to power and the establishment of his regime, the dates and extent of the atrocities committed against Jews and others as part of the Nazi program, the details of the wars of destruction unleashed against other countries, this could still be merely superficial information. It may allow you to pass a test, but is not yet psychologically meaningful knowledge.

The story of Auschwitz is so recent and its evil so enormous that it is still very much part of our present world. It is not and cannot be merely historical knowledge of facts and dates. We may thus

know 1815 as the date of the Congress of Vienna, where after Napoleon's defeat the princes and diplomats ushered in the political Europe of the 19th century. Auschwitz cries out for answers to moral questions to which there are still no clear answers, such as: How was it possible? Who is to blame for it? What can we do in response so that anything like it will never happen again? This questioning is itself unusual. We don't as a rule ask questions of a moral character about the murderous deeds perpetrated by a Stalin or Mao, let alone the innumerable atrocities of distant places and times.

To speculate about past events that *could* have been is seldom fruitful. Nevertheless on account of the enormity of World War II and Auschwitz, we may be excused if we start with a premise about which there is no disagreement and continue from there. Without Hitler, there would have been no Auschwitz. But equally, without Versailles, there would have been no Hitler. So in the following let us for a moment put reality aside and describe a world where, I believe, Auschwitz would have been avoided.

A European History without Auschwitz?

We must start at the end of World War I. Even though no enemy forces are inside Germany or even near its borders the people are weary of war and beginning to go hungry. Demands for a new political order are voiced where people will not have to go out to kill and be killed at the behest of their princes. Relying on President Wilson's fourteen points, Germany sues for an armistice. All of Germany's princes resign voluntarily and in their place a republican form of government is established. In fact, four European emperors disappear at that time: the heads of the German, Austrian, Russian and the Turkish empires. The map of Europe is reorganized with a diminished Austria, Hungary, Russia and Turkey, and the establishment of seven new countries: Czechoslovakia, Yugoslavia (formerly part of Austria), Poland (formerly divided between Russia, Germany and Austria) and Finland, Lithuania, Latvia, Estonia (formerly part of Russia).

And now we paint an imaginary scenario. The powers, the defeated as well as the victorious ones, ashamed of and overwhelmed by the catastrophic slaughter of the ten million war deaths, meet as equals in congress with three principal goals: One, to redraw the map of Europe according to the ascertained wishes of the people; two, to recognize that with the barbarism of the war the pretense of a justifiable colonial dispensation is over and to initiate reasonable steps toward a post-colonial world; three, to establish an international body that would facilitate peaceful solutions to international problems. (Points 1 and 3 were significant parts of President Wilson's proposals. Point 2 would not be recognized until after the end of World War II.)

A peace accord that was not vengeful and punishing, that did not insist on declaring Germany to be alone guilty of the calamity of the war could have avoided the deep hurt and humiliation which eventually fed Hitler's rise to national prominence. And war reparations, if any, would be geared to the economic potential so as to avoid a dangerous economic collapse. For instance, at the height of the Depression, in 1930, when President Hoover suggested temporary suspension of reparations [they were to

last for another 60 years!], France sharpened its economic squeeze. This move at the time contributed significantly to catapulting the Nazis into a leading national party of the faltering Weimar republic.

What I have described here is not entirely unrealistic. It *could* have happened. In that case it is reasonable to speculate that there would have been no historical Hitler and no Auschwitz. Actually, this imaginary scenario of 1919 is not far from what the Western powers did less than 30 years later, after World War II. There the victorious powers did not set out, as they did in 1919, to punish and humiliate Germany. Rather, they aimed at rehabilitating and helping the country along democratic and peace-oriented lines. And it was precisely the shock and the shame of the destruction wrought by the Nazis -- together with the perceived Communist threat -- that motivated this historically new attitude on the part of the Western powers.

My point in this imaginary exercise is not to spread the blame for Auschwitz beyond the perpetrators unto the Western diplomats at Versailles (who in any case implicitly did what the majority of their respective countries approved). Rather, it is to discourage you from getting yourself into the position of looking for blame and guilt in specific individuals when it comes to historical evil: for we are all part of history and Versailles belongs to our history.

By forcing Germany to accept sole responsibility for the war, the allies at Versailles set Germany along a path that in a kind of self-fulfilling prophecy led to the guilty deeds of a Hitler. He, as we learned, almost singlehandedly forced upon Germany and the rest of the world deeds and a war of destruction that had not been seen before. By putting blame for historical evil deeds on specific people, we place ourselves in a position to say: "Others, not we, did it." We effectively absolve ourselves from historical responsibility and feel no need to change potentially unhealthy social images or situations.

The Spiral of Destruction

I have attempted in this brief work to present the story of the Holocaust as something that was done and suffered by humankind -- that is, you and me. I have tried to show human psychology for what it is, how it has worked in recent European history. That is not the same as excusing the crimes and atrocities perpetrated. Rather, it seems to me, reconciliation and self-examination are the only way through which we can hope to assimilate and comprehend historical evil. Only then -- when we grasp the evil deeds as ours (that is, our culture's, our species') -- can we begin to examine how to overcome and avoid something similar in the future.

Our grand- and great-grand parents after World War I failed to initiate this process of reconciliation and self-examination -- with the catastrophic result that made the Hitler regime and Auschwitz possible. At the heavy cost of World War II (and the Holocaust is an integral component of that war) the Euro-American West at long last learned to stop the fratricidal cycle of vengeance and violence. There were the Napoleonic wars and the final collapse of the *first* German empire of about 850 years' duration around 1800; followed by the 1848 revolutions and the Franco-Prussian war of 1870 and the founding of the *second* German empire (that lasted less than 50 years); finally, we had the First World

War (1914-1918) and Versailles 1919, leading in 1933 to Hitler's so-called *third* empire (of just 12 years' duration} and to the Second World War (1939-1945).

In child development, says Piaget (1965), children learn to put reconciliation over vengeance, not on account of weakness but because with vengeance, as they say, "you would never stop." We call this "social maturity" and think of it as a desirable personal trait. Without it, the give and take of peer relations would quickly deteriorate into a never ending spiral of destruction within a context of aggressive tit for tat. Unfortunately, what children spontaneously acquire in interpersonal relations, is something exceedingly hard for societies to learn.

But in today's post-Hiroshima world, if we are to avoid another Auschwitz, we must show a similar maturity in our relations between different countries and cultures. We really have no choice. We no longer have the luxury of nurturing hostile international relations, threatening each other with war and vengeance. At the risk of possible human extinction, we must remain friends. We know that a third world war could bring about the destruction of not only one or two societies but of the entire human society.

There is broad consensus that Hitler in his self-destructive drive, facing certain defeat, would not have hesitated to use whatever weapons he had, even if they threatened to destroy his own country. In Chapters 8 and 9, we have talked at length about the ideology of war and destruction that permeated Hitler's mind and policies. If he had come to power just a few years later, or if the Nazis had not neglected nuclear research (they sneered at it as a "Jewish" science), Hitler could have been in charge of a nuclear arsenal that could well have exterminated human life on the globe.

So it is by the grace of a few years that Hitler did not have the material means to destroy the whole of humankind. This is something he would have been morally and emotionally only too eager to do, once he realized that Germany was unable to accomplish the cataclysmic task of destruction to which he felt called: to rid the world of what he termed "Jewish Bolshevism." Even as at the beginning of the war in the East Hitler set out to destroy entire populations who in his estimation were "unworthy of life" (see Chapters 3 and 4), so now in defeat he despised the very people he had considered uniquely superior. So that together with his own death he saw the entire human race as no longer "worthy of life." Here we have the most horrendous instance of pleasure in self-destruction: humanicide.

Are we capable of imagining what the destruction of humankind means? This is hardly possible. Because to imagine is to project our existence into an imaginary situation that, whatever it may be, is yet a situation of existence -- if not for us, at least for others such as us. So we can imagine our own future death as it will affect others who will still be around. They may think of us as having once in the past lived in this world. But with total human extinction, as we shall reflect in the next and last chapter, there will be nobody around; hence there will be no past and no future, just as there will be no present.

We have learned from survivors of death camps that conventional language is totally inadequate to describe life there. The Nazis had succeeded in creating there a world that no longer corresponded to

the ordinary elements of a human social image (Chapter 5). Whether it is personal relations, social communication, morals and traditional customs, memory of the past or dreams of the future, nothing of this was humanly alive for the inmates of the death camps. This experience was perhaps about as close as you can get to total personal/social extinction while still being alive. As one survivor expressed it, we perished and were dead psychologically, that is, as *human beings*, long before our bodies were physically killed.

So we survivors, not of Auschwitz, but of the history, that is, of the story of Auschwitz, have every reason to talk hesitantly about the Holocaust experience. And when in this chapter we speak of taking a stand and responding to that story so as to avoid another Auschwitz we are painfully aware that the victims and the survivors deserve our love and pity; but it is mainly from the perpetrators and bystanders that we can learn -- more precisely, learn what not to do. We want to avoid future social occasions when people, such as you and I, can set about making another Auschwitz. This may take the form of the Nazi camps, camps of pleasure in destruction, or the more indirect but at the same time more permanent nuclear form of Kant's "eternal peace": humanicide, the extinction of humankind.

Nuclear Bombs in Response to Hitler's Evil

The close association of the Hitler story and the building of the first nuclear bomb is a matter of history, a history that is as tragic and paradoxical as you would only expect in fiction. The "Jewish" (in Hitler's racist perspective, not in religion) physicist Einstein just before World War I had discovered the principles that launched nuclear science and made possible the splitting of the atom. Aghast at the atrocities of the first world war Einstein (Clark 1971), as nearly all leading intellectuals in Europe, became an ardent pacifist, indeed he was one of its foremost spokespersons. It was he who asked Freud in 1932 to reply to the question "Why war?" In a short article, Freud replied rather pessimistically by focusing on individual drives of aggression. One year later Hitler had come to power and Einstein while on a visit abroad did not think it prudent to return to his university post and domicile in Berlin. By now he had decided that in the face of Hitler's policies of destruction and aggression it would be immoral to remain a pacifist. (You may care to reflect that by that time nothing short of a militarily *well prepared* intervention on the part of *allied* world powers could have put a stop to Hitler.)

In the meantime, nuclear physicists in America, many themselves refugees from the Nazis, were afraid that Germany would continue nuclear research and come into sole possession of nuclear weapons. By 1942, with America at war against Japan and Germany, the physicists enlisted Einstein's help to alert President Roosevelt to that danger. Thus the supersecret Manhattan project to build an atomic bomb got under way. Later, Einstein was to call his role in initiating the project "my greatest mistake."

By the time the first bomb was ready to be tested the European war was over. The victorious powers met at the Potsdam Conference to plan the shape of post-war Europe: two democratically elected leaders, Truman for the US, Churchill for Britain (during the meeting a newly elected Atlee took over) and, third, Stalin, dictator for life of a genocidal regime. (And yet, Stalin's state was a primary

contributor to the victory over Hitler.) Four days after the end of the conference, on August 6, 1945 the bomb that had been feverishly developed to prevent Germany from having it first, was dropped on Japan, followed on August 9 with a second bomb. With a new ultimatum permitting Japan to retain the emperor (this was explicitly denied before the bombing), Japan surrendered August 14.

The combined death toll of civilians killed by the two atomic attacks is estimated to be around 300,000. Truman can hardly be faulted for using the bomb. To use one's weapons to maximum effect was expected, even if it involved civilian deaths. Nor could you blame him for not recognizing that with the bomb a threshold of killing had been crossed that threatened the existence of the human world. No one understood this at the time. In any case, the justification that the atomic bomb ended the war and saved a million American lives is a later interpretation that Truman did not (and did not have to) consider at that time (Walker).

Gory pictures of the Nazi death camps had been spread across Western newspapers and film screens. People felt rightly that they lacked words to adequately describe the scenes of Nazi horror. It was then that the phrase "unspeakable crimes" came into use. Pictures and the visual imagination were called upon to take the place of speech. When around the same time news of the bombs over Japan reached the American public, people naturally associated the mass death caused by the atomic blast with the killing centers of the Nazis.

In the case of the German enemy, the victorious powers used these pictures to impress upon the viewers the viciousness of the Nazi perpetrators. In contrast, the presentation of pictures and local news about the desolate destruction wrought by the bombs was heavily censored. Rather than pointing to the human agency, the officials focused instead on the tremendous power of the atomic bomb in general. We stressed what nuclear power could do for the USA as well as the possible danger it posed on the part of a potential hostile adversary: The Cold War was waiting in the wings.

Let us reflect for a moment on the social images of war, as we first discussed them in Chapters 2 and 3, and the changes within the short time span of 30 years. In 1914, at the beginning of World War I, the notion of killing enemy civilians was unthinkable and considered a heinous crime. By 1945, at the end of World War II, it had become routine. The reluctance of the USA to publish the effect of its nuclear bombing was without doubt a last remnant of an uneasy conscience for a deed that in the childhood of the perpetrators had been both morally and concretely unthinkable. Amazingly, under the umbrella of legitimate warfare, the extermination of millions and soon perhaps of all humankind had become psychologically compartmentalized as having nothing to do with morals.

Now Einstein, seeing the nuclear danger that had come about on account of Hitler and our defense against him, together with a majority of nuclear scientists became again a pacifist, or rather, a nuclear pacifist: "The splitting of the atom has changed everything except our way of thinking, and thus we drift toward unparalleled catastrophe," he cried out.

There is a tragic element in the position of these physicists who had been responsible for

constructing the bomb in response to a threat that turned out in the end no longer existed. Even as after World War I Einstein engaged other scientists and intellectuals in high-sounding schemes to avoid another war, so after the World War II he again became the spokesman for the danger of nuclear extinction. In the light of this danger the Holocaust and the danger of another genocide was at first neglected. However today, if our desire is equally to avoid both another Auschwitz and another Hiroshima, where should our focus be?

In this case, it seems to me more fruitful to focus on Auschwitz and the continuing danger of another genocide. Concrete instances of genocides are closer to our comprehension and unfortunately seem to recur frequently; whereas this is not the case for nuclear war. Moreover, any step that diminishes the likelihood of another genocide does the same for nuclear war.

I believe that our interest in the Holocaust story is all the more justified once the connection between Auschwitz and Hiroshima is recognized, more particularly once we realize *that the event Hiroshima has its source in the same historical configuration that made the event Auschwitz possible*. Along the lines of this chapter's previous considerations I would put it this way: Versailles, an instance and symbol of vengeful war-making, led to World War II with its Auschwitz, an instance and symbol of total destruction; and that war and Auschwitz led to Hiroshima, an equally threatening instance and symbol of total destruction.

Let us be honest. Hitler could not have effected the slaughter of millions of Jews if he had not involved Germany in a deadly war of destruction that took the lives of about another fifteen million civilians. Clearly, genocide is a form of warfare; and it is always closely tied to an ideology of violence and war. This would suggest that one way, perhaps the only way, to avoid another genocide such as was done at Auschwitz would be to turn away from the ideology of violence and war and thus avoid war itself altogether. However, from the perspective of our past history as well as the more recent history after World War II, this would hardly seem possible. But does the evidence really point in no other direction than a continuation of violence and wars as in all of our recorded history? And is it really the case that this direction will go on in spite of the fact that the weapons by themselves have now taken on a possibly genocidal, if not humanicidal and self-destructive quality?

The Promise of Democratic Peace

The answer to these two questions, fortunately for our world, is no. There is the evidence of the history of warfare to the contrary, provided we are careful to study not merely one warring party, but both parties to a conflict. In that case, a significant historical fact emerges: *Democratically elected regimes have never fought one another*. Following the lead of a few other historians, Weart (1998) investigated literally hundreds of instances of wars and near-wars, from antiquity through the present. This historical evidence, the author believes, justifies the statement that in the recorded past established democracies have never gone to war with each other. He further gives reasons that can explain this absence of war in a world where war making seemed endemic. And on that basis, the expectation does not seem to be

unrealistic that in the future too, wars (leading to possible genocide) *between* democratically elected regimes as well as genocidal upheavals *within* a regime can be avoided. (It is only fair to point out that the thesis is criticized as being too categorical; but even then it retains its potential validity.)

In this connection, Weart refers to the political culture that characterizes a democratic regime. Specifically, democracies permit -- more, they encourage the free expression of differing political opinions together with the practice of open discussion and mutual compromise, such as accepting the verdict of a majority vote. This is the first part of Weart's bold thesis. The second part asserts what should not be at all surprising, that the political culture at home in turn influences foreign relationships. From these premises it follows that just as at home democratic regimes do not use violence against a political opponent (who remains part of the in-group) neither do they do so against a foreign regime as long as they can trust it to act politically the way they themselves act. This trust itself is based on seeing the other country's political culture as similar to one's own.

Consider: To go to war with another party you have to see your enemy as being beyond the pale, as being the "out-group" in contrast to yourself and your friends, the "in-group." Now, a democratic regime can easily see a different regime as a threatening and untrustworthy out-group and apply to it the ideology of violence and war. Hence by themselves, democracies have fought about as many wars as other regimes. However, when a democratic regime finds itself in some conflict with a similarly democratic regime, it is inclined to extend the mutual trust that prevails in the in-group and treat the foreign party as it might treat a political opponent at home. It will tend to use the habits of frank diplomatic discussion and political compromise, characteristic of its own in-group political culture.

I believe that Weart's historical evidence can be further deepened by developmental and biological considerations. As I summarized at the beginning of this chapter, children come to construct their social images within the context of a peer society. It is in mutual peer relations that the original unilateral relations to parents and adults become balanced in the direction of an autonomous, that is, responsible person. A democratic culture is therefore more likely to facilitate healthy mutual relations than other political regimes where hierarchical unilateral relations are socially institutionalized.

Apart from human psychology, Piaget (1989) as a biologist can assert that contrary to popular misinterpretations of aggressive social Darwinism, "the more one examines the mechanism of life the more one discovers that love and altruism -- that is, the negation of war -- are inherent in the nature of living things. Only later complications due to environmental inertia, and thus, competition, force living creatures to a restricted assimilation and ... in the human species, war. To struggle against war is therefore to act according to the logic of life against the logic of things, and that is the whole of morality." These evolutionary considerations confirm the historical perspectives in Chapter 3 of the relatively late beginning of human warfare.

War and Ethics

With regard to the political culture of Hitler's Germany that led to the crime of the Holocaust,

Weart (pp.282-285) points out to what extent history textbooks, even those written long before the Nazis took power, were found to reek of chauvinism, militarism, and racism. “Here was evidence,” the historian exclaimed, “that the true enemy of democracy was not just the madman Hitler but an entire political culture.” Along this line I attempted to show in Chapters 2 and 6 to what extent the Nazi atrocities were historically connected to a variety of negative factors that prevailed already in the political culture of pre-World War I Germany.

Once the genie was out of the bottle and the nuclear bomb and its use had become part of history, no new discoveries of Einstein or other concerned scientists could make it disappear. Moreover, the history surrounding the first fifty years of the nuclear bomb was one of secrecy, fear and war, first hot, then cold war; and the bomb contributed significantly to this context of suspicion. This is not a psychological situation conducive to any healthy development. Yet, as Einstein said and everybody agrees, the bomb and its new power require from us a new consciousness and a new sense of global responsibility.

It may yet turn out that by far the greatest "evil" for which Hitler's evil genius can be said to be (directly or indirectly) responsible is the nuclear bomb. You notice that I put the word *evil* under quotes, for I do not want to equate or compare the evil of the bomb with the evil of Auschwitz or with other genocidal evils of mass killings. The nuclear bomb is an evil of a different kind, but it is an evil nonetheless. Its very use is genocidal. As we remarked earlier, in the hand of an evil person like Hitler it would not have remained merely a threatening deterrence.

Permit me to say one more thing about our newly developed ability to exterminate the human world. The whole of life and of biological evolution, the “logic of life” (in contrast to the “logic of things” as quoted earlier), from the most primitive plant organism to the most complex animal, is permeated by one inexorable law: “Conserve your species!” Under that banner life as we know it, in all its various manifestations, has flourished for millions of years and will continue to flourish. Against this background of life, look at us, the human animal who has now acquired the know-how of effectively breaking that law by destroying our own species. And Hitler has shown us also (if proof were needed) that we can intentionally desire this humanicide and take pleasure in doing so. At that limit, as in the death camps, ordinary language and common moral principles fail us (See Chapter 5).

Taking a Stand Against Auschwitz

Taking a stand today in response to the story of Auschwitz means therefore first and foremost to recognize the social images of destruction that made the reality of Auschwitz possible. It means to acknowledge, starting with World War I, the images of destruction that animated the historical events leading up to World War II and Auschwitz and to recognize potentially destructive images within our own society. That would include images that have survived from the not so distant past and permitted Nazism to raise its evil head and flourish. Images of race, ethnicity, war, authority, religion are still with us, images that have repeatedly been misused in the course of human history. It remained for the Nazis to

show us their misuse almost to the limit of near world-wide destruction.

Above all, taking a stand is to acknowledge responsibility for the state of our present culture and society. Do we recognize that with the nuclear know-how developed in fear of Hitler's destruction, we now have the material power to destroy our own society, indeed the entire human world? And what are we doing about it? And here we come to examining our own personal social images and our own tendencies in the direction of pleasure in destruction and self-destruction.

Can we muster enough courage to overcome our ineradicable tendency for self-deception, at least with regard to those areas that concern the minimum well-being and the conservation of our human world? That implies, as I stressed in Chapter 1, overcoming our convenient habitual attitude of not-wanting-to-know. We also recall from the preceding chapter what all the rescuers seemed to have in common: They went out of their way, behind the official lies, the deceptions and the frenzy of enthusiastic crowds, to acknowledge the reality of the Jewish genocide and to respond to that reality as ordinary human beings.

If the Holocaust morally motivates us to demand a world where such genocide is no longer possible, we have as yet to fully acknowledge the sad truth that genocide is but war "by other means." Unfortunately, as long as war is a concrete possibility, genocide is and will always remain a concrete possibility (Chapter 7}. I believe that an adequate response to the history/story of the Holocaust must *go beyond the horror of genocides and of genocidal regimes and face the full horror of war and possible humanicide*. I refer here specifically to the war of massive destruction as it developed during World War II, first initiated by the Nazis and then inexorably imitated in response to the Nazi onslaught of destruction.

To all but the fiercest Nazi followers, the genocide of the Holocaust is morally vicious precisely because the victims could in no way be connected to any conceivable war-like situation. The Jews, men and women, young and old, who were slaughtered by the Nazi war machine, could in no sensible interpretation be described as military or political enemies. Hitler's slaughter of the Jews was then neither the killing of real or potential enemies nor was it the terrorizing of the German or any other population in order to counteract some internal political opposition. Justifiably, we can regard the Holocaust perpetrated by the Nazis as something close to an absolute evil, an evil with no possible militarily or politically related extenuating circumstances.

In other genocidal situations, in one way or another, war-related or internal political terror or violence enter the picture and to that extent lessen and relativize the moral evil that was so clear and absolute in the case of the Jewish Holocaust. However, precisely on account of the possible genocidal effects of modern weapons, we know that today we can no longer continue to use war aggressively the way we practiced it throughout recorded history. And in fact, since 1945, the nature of war and warfare has drastically changed and is frequently tending in the direction of police actions.

On this very point, a beacon of hope is provided for us by the evidence of history on democratic

regimes as free of genocide and as being at peace with each other. Short of blind faith in a transcendent providence ("God the Creator would not permit it" -- yet God permitted Auschwitz) I know of no other reason for optimism. When the issue today is conservation or destruction of humankind, there is no longer a moral choice. The conclusion of the camp survivor -- to save the world -- becomes as absolute as the evil of Auschwitz.

"At the end of the little camp," writes J. Semprun, a former political camp inmate at *Buchenwald*, "I was watching the setting of the sun over the snow-filled Thuringian plateau. ... I thought of this tree with its almost unreal beauty. I had left the road, I looked at the tree. I had the fleeting impression of discovering an essential truth: the truth of this tree, of all the trees around, of the entire forest, of all forests, of the world, a truth that no longer needed my looking. I had felt with all the power of my fast surging blood that my death would not take away from the tree its shining beauty, it would merely take away from the world my looking. For a short moment of eternity I looked at this tree with the eyes from beyond death, with the eyes of my own death. And the tree was still as beautiful as ever. My death did not distort the beauty of the tree. Later I would be reading an aphorism of Kafka that expressed perfectly what I felt indistinctly but intensely this morning as I was looking at the birch tree at Buchenwald: 'In the battle between you and the world help the world!'"

When global death and extinction is a potential alternative, personal and societal survival becomes an ever-renewed utopia.

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AFTERWORD – On New Perspectives on the Holocaust

Overview: – I summarize here what I believe to be the somewhat new and perhaps controversial perspectives on the Holocaust which pervade the entire work.

Although some of these perspectives have been clearly articulated within the text, others may not have been explicitly mentioned. A connected list of all of them together in a clearly articulated form could help readers in two ways. It should make it easier to grasp the big picture and form a meaningful personal response; and it may help avoid getting involved in conflicts of opinions on some particulars that have perhaps but a minor bearing on the whole. In this way this chapter can serve as a closing summary of the present text. –

It is curious that a historical event of such magnitude as the murderous extinction of Jewish life in Europe has not generated a multitude of conflicting opinions. Apart from the German *Historikerstreit* [dispute of German historians as to the origin of the intentional decision of extermination], there seems to be what I can call a standard view about this event (Bauman, Novcick). It stops short at reporting the facts and viewing the Holocaust as an unspeakable and basically incomprehensible evil. This pervasive view gives the impression as if there could be no genuine dispute or debate about this particularly evil episode of human history. Most important, insofar as there is no debate, there seems to be no need to form a personal response except perhaps a wishful “Never again.” Now insofar as these comments are true, it indicates an impoverished knowledge about the Holocaust.

Beyond the reporting of historical events, this book had one specific aim, namely, to go beyond the standard view and turn the story of the Holocaust into living history. Living history means living knowledge. My intention was to reach students far removed from the context of those twelve years of Nazi domination, 1933 - 1945, and help them assimilate the atrocities they perpetrated. And the major way to accomplish this goal was to portray the actors (victims, perpetrators, followers, bystanders) as psychologically real and believable persons.

In Part I of this text we touched on what I believe to be the significant historical happenings of the Holocaust within the given psychological and historical context. In Part II we discussed this context in some detail. Importantly, this Part III focuses on meaningful

responses to the Holocaust. My hope is that thus the story of the Holocaust, if not entirely comprehensible (no individual history can achieve that), becomes at least humanly understandable and psychologically real. Since it is impossible to narrate “facts” unless we present them under certain perspectives my aim in this chapter is to highlight the major perspectives that have guided my presentation of the story of the Holocaust.

Before elaborating twelve specific points, I re-state first the new overall perspective pervading the entire book. I look at the Holocaust not as something that was done to us by some other, strangely deranged people but as something that was done and suffered by people who psychologically were much like you and me, specifically, the people of the post-World War I European-North American generation. This kind of attempt of presenting the Holocaust as a connected human story differs, I believe, from what is usually found in the many extant memorials or museums, as well as in textual or visual descriptions. These presentations have left people deeply touched, no doubt, but at the same time with an empty feeling in the sense that they do not know what to do with all this strange information. An air of unreality hovers about the “standard” Nazi story. It seems to belong to a different planet. People do not recognize themselves in the story and cannot relate it to the history they know.

At the same time, readers may find these specific perspectives not only uncommon but overly controversial. They may have accepted for themselves what I called earlier the “standard” view on the Holocaust. I would like to assure them that I have no personal interest in controversy whatsoever. Rather I attempt to follow the ideal of psychological truth so as to attain a story which is what I earlier called “psychologically real.” I have consistently attempted to follow this ideal in my professional life as a researcher in child development. This ideal is of course unattainable in practice, whether in history or psychology. But I believe, it is still worthwhile to aim at it in a methodological and honest way while always remaining open to, indeed eager for, constructive criticism.

1/ A point that is often played down is the fact that the Holocaust was an integral part of Hitler’s overall war of destruction. Even though at times it may appear as if there were two parallel wars, one a so-called “conventional” war against the Soviet Union and other powers, the other the Holocaust, a criminal genocidal war against Jews and others, this is a potentially

dangerous historical and moral misconception. There were not two wars, one as it were, morally passable and the other, morally unacceptable. Rather, as I tried to show in the text, Hitler unleashed a criminal, genocidal war, primarily against Poland and the Soviet Union, and in the course of this war perpetrated the Holocaust. It was a part of this war, even though militarily it was not only not significant but seemed frequently counterproductive – and that is the reason why there is the appearance of two separate wars. The Holocaust started in the fall of 1941 with the onslaught on the Soviet Union and is incomprehensible without it. In fact, the Holocaust could not have been accomplished without the special context of a war of destruction and Hitler knew this and acted accordingly (Chapter 3).

As for that so-called “conventional” war against the Slavic East, this went far beyond the customary violence and cruelty experienced in wars of the past. As I pointed out in Chapter 3, Hitler himself explicitly admonished his generals not to think in terms of conventional chivalry and rules of warfare. In this war, there were no moral rules other than the rules of destruction. In fact, that war of destruction was something Hitler could have conceivably done even if there had been no Jews around -- as was the case in Japan’s war that included a large number of ghastly atrocities. A Jewish Holocaust without a war of destruction was practically impossible, whereas a war of destruction without a Jewish Holocaust would have been possible.

2/ To fathom the full extent of the crime committed we have to recognize, as I insisted in the text, that the mass killing of civilians within the context of the war of destruction was probably Hitler’s and the Nazis’ major crime. For instance, as pointed out in Chapter 9, it is estimated that about 10½ million Slavic civilians were killed by the Nazis. The total number of people killed between 1933 and 1945 for which the Nazis are directly or indirectly responsible is about 50 million. So we have the curious situation that where from the military and political perspective the Holocaust is seen as an insignificant part of the war, from the moral perspective it is of course regarded as a significant, indeed, the most significant part of the Nazis’ many crimes. – But we have also learned not to insist on comparative judgments according to some unreal scale of immorality.

3/ Moreover, the Nazi genocide has to be placed in the context of other genocides and government-sponsored mass killings. As I pointed out, also in Chapter 9, during the present

20th century alone about 172 million people have perished in mass murders instituted by their governments. Mass murder and genocide were thus fairly common events. The uniqueness of the Holocaust is then not in the perpetrated genocide. Even during these past few years, we have been able to witness genocides in Rwanda and in the territory of the former Yugoslavia.

4/ What is probably unique in the Holocaust was the basic lack of any acceptable reasons for the mass killings of the Jews -- apart from the desire to eliminate all Jews. In all other cases, there was always the fictitious moral justification of defending the state against potential enemies or the more or less naked desire to acquire a region and its wealth from those murdered. Thus, in March 1940 Stalin ordered the massacre of about 22,000 Polish officers who were prisoners-of-war. Three years later retreating Germans discovered the site of their mass graves in the Katyń forest, near Smolensk. Stalin brazenly lied at first and blamed the Germans for that atrocity. Even when the truth became known this crime, just as other Soviet atrocities, did not cause a moral outrage comparable to the Holocaust. Rather, it was accepted as a sad by-product of a cruel war or a cruel government. If need be, it could be morally “justified” as a “conventional” strategy to terrorize a country and kill its intelligentsia.

In contrast, the absence of this fictitious justification in the case of the murder of Jews is the major reason why we judge the Holocaust as uniquely criminal whereas we continue to judge the war itself as morally “conventional.” We separate the Holocaust from the war even though we know that from the Nazi perspective the fictitious justification worked, precisely because Germany was involved in a war. Therefore a German’s conscience could be at peace with the fiction that in killing Jews they were killing an enemy with whom they were at war. However in today’s perspective, we do not allow the Nazis this liberty in forming a conscience that would provide them with a justifying fiction. Rather, we now morally and legally condemn them for having this kind of belief and conscience. In any case, there remain tricky moral problems. It is easy to understand that we may prefer to condemn the Nazis as perpetrators of the Holocaust while forgetting that for them it was part of the destructive war situation. In my view, there is no separation: Hitler’s war of destruction, including the Holocaust, was a moral crime.

5/ Returning now to the evil, the potential moral evil of war itself, we have to

recognize that for millennia war making had been an integral part of our history. Even though theoretically only a “just” war was considered morally justifiable, there is no recorded case where some overriding authority (e.g., the church, the empire) ever declared a particular war “unjust.” Hitler’s war making did come as a shock to Europeans, including the German civilians and military. However, this was not because of any moral qualms but because Europeans had only recently suffered the catastrophe of a world war. Apart from this shock of the unexpected and unwanted, Hitler’s war strategy was a familiar and traditional political process, part of our historical and cultural heritage. If there ever was an “unjust” war, Hitler’s war of destruction perpetrated against the Slavic East was it. Yet for whatever reason, it was never condemned as an “unjust” war and thus was never opened up to the dimension of moral culpability.

6/ On the question of the fate of the persecuted Jews, to keep complaining about the small number of rescuers of Jewish victims is psychologically understandable but historically unjustifiable. As I try to demonstrate in Chapters 10 and 14, there is good reason to hold that there were hundreds of thousands, probably millions of non-Jews who contributed to the rescue of Jews, some even within Germany and Austria, but especially in many other countries such as Poland, Netherlands, and France. Many rescuers were thereby risking their own lives. The sad truth is that no amount of individual heroic actions could have stopped the government-sponsored Holocaust. To imply otherwise is not only false but ostensibly unfair.

7/ It is equally unhistorical and unfair to complain about lack of diplomatic assistance or unwillingness in welcoming refugees into other countries. It is perhaps not widely known that before World War I there existed many countries of immigration, particularly America, but also the Russian and the Ottoman empires as well as colonial countries. Thousands of refugees, say, after the failed revolutions in the Europe of 1848, made good use of these openings. But by the 1920s, a closed world had come about with the newly invented requirement of passports and visas (it was started by Czechoslovakia). Massive rescue actions and immigrations for refugees of persecution were simply not part of the contemporary political reality. It is only today that these humanitarian concerns are beginning to be raised and acted upon at times, and that mainly as a belated reaction to Hitler’s war and the Holocaust.

The international July 1938 conference at Evian, Switzerland, initiated by America, to discuss helping the about 600.000 persecuted Jews under German control was doomed from the start. It was at best a case of wishful self-deception, a kind of magical hope that somehow reality would turn out different from the way it was. To assume that this lack of helping refugees is primarily a sign and result of antisemitism seems to me at best a gratuitous assumption and at worst an unhelpful and injurious allegation. No country during the Great Depression of the inter-war period would have been prepared to take in a large number of refugees. And in fact, not a single country was prepared to accept more than the legally stipulated number of immigrants. Moreover a year later, with the 1939 occupation of Poland, the number of persecuted Jews had to be multiplied by ten. And before the halt of the German assault against the Soviet Union in the winter of 1941, Hitler was of a mind to leave the solution of the “Jewish problem” to the future, after he had won the war. However, this speedy victory eluded him and he thus began to conceive of and implement the radical solution of total extermination, known as the Holocaust.

8/ Three famously quoted instances of lack of help are uncritically presented as evidence of antisemitic attitudes. First, there was president Roosevelt’s refusal in June 1939 to allow entry to close to 1000 Jewish refugees on the German ship, SS St. Louis. Apart from what was said above about the absence of humanitarian legislation, what is seldom mentioned is the fact that at the time the Holocaust had not yet started. A second often quoted instance is the refusal to bomb Auschwitz or the railroad tracks leading there in 1944. To bomb the camp would have included the killing of thousands of Jews, something nobody was prepared to do. To bomb a target as small as a single railroad track is a feat that is perhaps feasible in the late 1990s but not then; in any case, this damage could be repaired in a day or two. Thirdly, there is the issue of Jewish immigration into Palestine where it is forgotten that Britain was in dire danger of losing the war; it is then argued as if its concerns about Arab sensitivity were unjustified and merely another sign of antisemitism.

9/ Points 6 - 8 in no way put into dispute the fact that there were also hundreds of thousands if not millions who actively contributed to, and willingly participated, in the slaughter of Jews. The Jewish genocide was initiated by Germans and Austrians, but it was eagerly and

widely embraced by many people in Europe's countries West and East, such as France, Netherlands, Norway, Slovakia, Croatia, Serbia, Poland, the Baltic countries, Ukraine, Belarus, Rumania, and Hungary. These facts seem to argue, as I do in the text, for the working of a vicious culture and psychology common to most European peoples.

10/ The sensational thesis of Goldhagen, to the effect that practically all ordinary Germans were "Hitler's willing executioners" or that there was an alleged German-specific deadly antisemitism is patently unhistorical and biased. See point 4 above. This tendency to think in black and white, and regard nearly all Germans as Nazi killers seems to me the flip side of the equally biased notion that there were hardly any non-Jews who went out of their way to rescue Jews. See also the next two chapters. In an age of the fear of moral relativism, the belief in a unique and absolute evil is used to reflect favorably on our own moral high ground. --

As a concluding overall new perspective in this text full of unspeakable atrocities I come back to my overall emphasis on ordinary psychology and on making the story of the Holocaust psychologically "real.". These two sides of my emphasis are intimately related. "Ordinary" psychology includes many "dark" aspects which we would prefer not to recognize within us and to project unto others, such as the Nazis. In this straightforward way we occupy the moral high ground and comfortably deceive ourselves by looking at the Nazi crimes as perpetrated by other people and not feeling at all responsible for these actions. In an historically self-destructive manner, we do not see them as being our and our society's business. I counteract this tendency of societal self-deception and self-destruction so deeply ingrained in our psychology, even as I attempt to lay bare the degree of pleasure in deception and destruction practiced by the Nazi perpetrators themselves. By emphasizing general psychological attitudes this present work presents a continuation of my previous psychological research. It can be seen as a kind of developmental psychology applied to our culture, involving the Holocaust as one particular horrifying historical instance within that culture.

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